

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF
CLEVERNESS

Vol. XVIII

MARCH, 1906

No. 3

CONTENTS

Phantom Wires	Arthur Stringer	1
Spring and Love	Clinton Scollard	81
A Case of Sister Ann	Sewell Ford	82
Merely Players	Mrs. Poultney Bigelow	90
In Your Little House	Richard Kirk	92
Ward vs. Ward	William R. Lighton	93
Dream Song	Clarence Urmy	100
Farquhar's Masterpiece	Emma Wolf	101
Brangwaine on the Watch Tower	Jeannette I. Helm	111
The Chameleon	Edwin L. Sabin	112
Echoes	Henry C. Rowland	113
Social Pests	C. F. Rooper	115
The Maxims of Methuselah	Gelett Burgess	116
The Accuser	William Hamilton Hayne	119
The Health-food Man	Gideon Wurdz	120
The Bankruptcy of Tears	Maurice Francis Egan	121
Tied	Arthur Stanley Wheeler	125
The Betrothal Bureau	Pomona Penrin	133
The Underland	Isabel Moore	140
Lettres Intimes	Paul Giniety	141
Remembrance	Frank Dempster Sherman	144
Eliph Hewlett, Elucidator	Ellis Parker Butler	145
Two at the Play	John O'Keeffe	151
An Avowal	Felix Carmen	152
The Empty Glass	Edna Kenton	153

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$2.50

SINGLE COPIES 25 CENTS

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted

Entered at New York Post-Office as second-class mail matter

Issued monthly by Ess Ess Publishing Company, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York

COPYRIGHT, 1906, BY ESS ESS PUBLISHING COMPANY

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



The First Complete and Uniform Plates of the Works of
LAURENCE STERNE

A library that does not contain the works of Laurence Sterne is as incomplete as though Scott, Thackeray, Bulwer and Dickens were omitted. Sterne was as typical of his age as was Shakespeare of the Elizabethan period. Owing to his freedom and audacity of expression many of his writings have been criticised by the prudish and narrow-minded, often to the detriment of his personal character.

Sterne beat the French humorists at their own game and what English critics have said in denunciation of Rabelais, Balzac, de Kock, Flaubert and de Maupassant, French critics echoed when writing of Sterne. The situations and subtlety which abound in his books are most laughter-provoking. He is the one purely realistic writer of his age who has escaped the taint of vulgarity.

TRISTRAM SHANDY, SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY and the rest of Sterne's works place him beyond dispute amongst classics. Of wits and philosophers there have been many, of satirists not a few, but Sterne is perhaps the *ONLY WRITER who greatly combined wit, philosophy and satire.*

A DISSECTOR OF HUMAN EMOTIONS.
Long have we waited for the complete edition of the works of this famous author whose works have heretofore been clothed only in cheap binding, and printed from small and almost unreadable type, and never before in a complete uniform edition.

A FEW OPINIONS
"We could not at any price spare Sterne from English literature."—*George Saintsbury, Translator of Balzac*

"Whoever read him feels himself at once lifted above the petty cares of the world. His humor is inimitable, and it is not every kind of humor that leaves the soul calm and serene."—*Gotha.*

"In his power of approaching and touching the finer feelings of the heart, he has never been excelled, if indeed he has ever been equalled."—*Sir Walter Scott.*

AN UNUSUAL SAVING.
Through an extraordinary transaction in the publishing world—the failure of two publishing houses and another one liquidating its business—I am able to offer, for a short time only, a few sets of the complete works of Laurence Sterne in a uniform and deluxe binding, and in every way fit for library purposes; as perfect and well-made as the \$10.00 per volume edition, and while they last I will dispose of them at considerably less than half that price and on terms of small monthly payments.

CUT HERE—MAIL TO-DAY.
Clinton T. Brainard, S. S. Mch.—06.
No. 425 Fifth Ave., New York City.

Please send me illustrated booklet, particulars, etc. (without obligation on my part, regarding the edition deluxe of the uniform and complete edition of the works of Laurence Sterne in fourteen volumes which you are selling at much below the regular price.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

The April Smart Set

AN AUTOMOBILE STORY

Which will be certain to delight a host of readers, will open the April number. In that modern class of fiction it will stand out as a particularly fine piece of work. It is entitled

The Pink Typhoon

By Harrison Robertson.

No single issue of any magazine will publish so great a variety of stories as will appear in the next number of this periodical.

There will be

A GHOST STORY by ETHEL WATTS
MUMFORD, . . . "The Woman in Gray"

A TRAGIC STORY by FREDERICK
TABOR COOPER, "Franco's Lucky Penny"

A MARDI GRAS STORY, by M. E. M.
DAVIS, "The Dragon Fly"

A THEATRICAL STORY by EMMA
B. KAUFMAN, "The Understudy"

A LOVE STORY by GERTRUDE LYNCH,
. "The Man and the Bird"

A HUMOROUS STORY by ELLIS
PARKER BUTLER, "Non Compos Mentis"

A PATHETIC STORY by G. VERE
TYLER, "The Little Gasconne"

A COLLEGE STORY by ARTHUR
STANLEY WHEELER, . . . "The Byword"

A FRENCH STORY by MAURICE
LEVEL, "La Vere"

A CLEVER ESSAY by GELETT
BURGESS, . . . "The Sulphitic Theory"

The best poetry will also appear, from such writers as BLISS CARMAN, CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS, WALLACE IRWIN, LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE, EDITH M. THOMAS and THEODOSIA GARRISON.

PHANTOM WIRES*

By Arthur Stringer

THE AZURE COAST

AS Durkin and the young Chicagoan stepped out of the brilliantly lighted theatre into the balmy night air a seductive mingling of perfumes and music and murmuring voices blew in their hot faces, like a cooling wave.

A group of gay and laughing women, with their aphrodisiac rustle of silk and flutter of lace, floated carelessly past.

"And who and what are *they*?" asked the younger man, as his gaze followed them to where they drifted and scattered through the lamp-strewn garden like a cluster of golden butterflies.

"Those are the slaves who sand the arena!" retorted Durkin bitterly, with his unperturbed eyes on the softly-waving palms.

The younger man sighed.

"You can say what you like, but this is the centre of the world, to *my* way of thinking!"

"The centre of—putrescence!" ejaculated Durkin. The younger man merely laughed with conciliatory good-nature as he glanced appreciatively back at the bon-bon stateliness of the Casino front. But into the older man's mind crept the impression that they were merely passing, in going from crowded theatre to open garden and street, from one playhouse to another. It all seemed to him, indeed, nothing more than a transition of theatricalities. For that outer play-world which lay along Monaco's three short miles of marble stairway and villa and hill-side garden appeared to him, in his

momentary sub-conscious mood of dejection, as artificial and unnatural and unrelated as the life which he had just seen pictured across the footlights of the over-pretty and meringue-like little theatre.

"Well, Monte Carlo's good enough for me, all right, all right!" persisted the young Chicagoan, as they made their way down the lamp-hung promenade. And he laughed with a sort of luxurious contentment, holding out his cigarette-case as he did so. The older man, catching a light from the proffered match, said nothing in reply. Something in the other's betrayingly boyish laugh grated on his nerves, though he paused, punctiliously, beside his chance-found companion, while together they gazed down at the twinkling lights of the bay, where the soft and violet Mediterranean lay under a soft and violet sky, and the boat-lamps were languidly swaying dots of white and red, and the Promontory stood outlined in electric globes, like a woman's breast threaded with pearls, and the perennial, ever-cloying perfumes floated up from square and thicket and garden.

There was an eternal menace about it, Durkin concluded. There was something subversive and undermining and unnerving in its very atmosphere. It gave him the impression of being always under glass. It made him ache for the sting and bite of a New England north-easter. It screened and shut off the actualities and perpetuities of life as completely as the drop and wings of a playhouse might. Its sense of casual and careless calm, too, seemed to him only the rest of a

spinning top. Its unrelated continuities of appeal, its incessant coquetries of attire, its panoramic beauty of mountain and cape and sea-front, its parade of ventral pleasure, its primordial and undisguised appeal to the carnival spirit, its frank, exotic festivity, its volatile and almost too vital atmosphere, and, above all, its glowing and over-odorous gardens and flowerbeds, its overcrowded and grimly Dionysian promenade, its murmurous and alluring restaurants on steep little boulevards—it was all a blind, Durkin argued with himself, to drape and smother the cynical misery of the place. Underneath all its flaunting and waving softnesses life ran grim and hard—as grim and hard as the rock that lay so close beneath its jonquils and violets and verdure of mimosa and orange and palm.

He hated it, he told himself, as any right-minded and clean-living man should hate paper roses or painted faces. Every foot of it, that night, seemed a muffled and mediate insult to intelligence. The too open and illicit invitation of its confectionery-like halls, the insipidly emphatic pretentiousness of the Casino itself—Durkin could never quite decide whether it reminded him of a hurriedly finished exposition building or of a child's birthday cake duly iced and bedecked—the tinsel glory, the hackneyed magnificence, of its legitimized and ever-orderly gaming dens, the eternal claws of greed beneath the voluptuous velvet of indolence—it all combined to fill his soul with a sense of hot revolt, as had so often before happened during the past long and lonely weeks, when he had looked up at the soft green of olive and eucalyptus and then down at the intense turquoise curve of the harbor fringed with white foam. Always, at such times, he had marveled that man could turn one of earth's most beautiful gardens into one of crime's most crowded haunts. The ironic injustice of it embittered him; it left him floundering in a sea of moral indecision at a time when he most needed some for-

lorn belief in the beneficence of natural law. It outraged his incongruously persistent demand for fair play, just as the sight of the jauntily clad gunners shooting down pigeons on that tranquil and Edenic little grass-plot at the foot of the Promontory had done.

For underneath all the natural beauty of Monaco Durkin had been continuously haunted by the sense of something unclean and leprous and corroding. Under its rouge and roses, at every turn, he found the insidious taint.

And more than ever, tonight, he had a sense of witnessing Destiny stalking through those soft gardens, of Tragedy skulking about its regal stairways.

For it was there, in the midst of those unassisting and enervating surroundings, he dimly felt, that he himself was to choose one of two strangely divergent paths. Yet he knew, in a way, that his decision had already been forced upon him, that the dice had been cast and counted. He had been trying to sweep back the rising sea with a broom; he had been trying to fight down that tangled and tortuous past which still claimed him as its own. And now all that remained for him was to slip quietly and unprotestingly into the current which clawed and gnawed at his feet. He had been tried too long; the test, from the first, had been too crucial. He might, in time, even find some solacing thought in the fitness between the act and its environment—here he could fling himself into an obliterating Niagara, not of falling waters, but of falling men and women. Yes, it was a stage all prepared and set for the mean and sordid and ever recurring tragedy of which he was the puppet. For close about him seethed and boiled, as in no other place in the world, all the darker and more despicable passions of humanity. He inwardly recalled the types with which his stage was embellished; the fellow puppets of that gilded and arrogant and idle world, the curled and perfumed princes, the waxed and watching *boulevardiers*

side by side with virginal and unconscious American girls, pallid and impoverished grand dukes in the wake of painted, but wary Parisians, stiff-mustached and mysterious Austrian counts lowering at doughty and indignant Englishwomen; bejeweled beys and pashas brushing elbows with unperturbed New England school-teachers astray from Cook's; monocled thieves and gamblers and princelings, jaded tourists and skulking parasites—and always the disillusioned and waiting women.

"That play got on your nerves, didn't it?" suddenly asked the lazy, half-careless voice at his side. Durkin and the young Chicagoan were in the musky-smelling promenade by this time, and up past the stands at the sea-front the breath of the Mediterranean blew in their faces, fresh, salty, virile.

"This whole place gets on my nerves!" said Durkin testily. Yes, he told himself, he was sick of it, sick of the monotony, of the idleness, of the sullen malevolence of it all. It was gay only to the eyes; and to him it would never seem gay again.

"Oh, that comes of not knowing the language!" maintained the other stoutly, and, at the same time, comprehensively. He had toyed with art for two winters in Paris, so scene by scene he had been able to translate the little drama that had appeared so farcical and Frenchy to his older countryman in exile.

Durkin's lip curled a little.

"No—it comes of knowing *life*!" he answered, with a touch of impatience. He felt the gulf that separated their two oddly diverse lives—the one the youth eager to dip into experience, the other a fugitive from a febrile past that still shadowed and menaced him. He listened with only half an ear as the Chicagoan expounded some glib and ancient principle about the fairy tale being truer than truth itself.

"Why," he continued argumentatively, "everything that happened in that play might happen here, tonight!"

"Rubbish!" ejaculated Durkin brusquely, remembering how lonely he must indeed have been thus to attach himself to this youth of the studios. But he added, as a matter of form: "You think, then, that life today is as romantic as it once was?"

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried the other. "Look at Monte Carlo here! Of course it is. It's more crowded, more rapid; it holds *more* romance! We didn't put it all off, you know, with doublet and hose!"

"No, of course not," answered Durkin absently. Life, at that moment, was confronting him so grimly, so flat and sterile and uncompromising in its secret exactions, that he had no heart to theorize about it.

"For instance," maintained the young Chicagoan, once more proffering his cigarette-case to Durkin, "for instance, take that big Mercedes touring-car with the canopy top, coming down through the crowd there. You'll agree, at first sight, that such things mean good-bye to the mounted knight, to chivalry, and all that romantic old horseman business. It's up to date and practical and sordid and commonplace. It's what we call machinery. But, supposing, now, instead of holding Monsieur le Duc Somebody, or Milord So-and-So, or Signor Comte Somebody-Else, with his wife or his mistress—I say, supposing it held—well, my young sister Alice, whom I left so sedately contented at Brighton, running away with an Indian rajah!"

"And you would call that romance?"

"Exactly!"

Durkin turned and looked at the approaching car.

"While, as a matter of fact," he continued, with his exasperatingly smooth smile, "it seems to be holding a very much overdressed young lady presumably from the Folies-Bergère or the Olympia."

The younger man, looking back beside him, turned to listen, confronted by the sudden excited comments of a middle-aged woman, obviously Parisian, on the arm of a lean and solemn

man with dyed and waxed mustachios.

"You're quite wrong," he said excitedly. "It's young Lady Boxspur—the new English beauty. See, they're crowding out to get a glimpse of her!"

"Who's Lady Boxspur?" asked Durkin, hanging stolidly back.

"She's simply ripping. I got a glimpse of her this afternoon in front of the Terrasse, after she'd first motored over from Nice with old Szapary! This Frenchman here has just been telling his wife that she's the loveliest woman on the Riviera today. Come on!"

Durkin stood indifferently, under the white glare of the electric lamp, watching the younger man push through to the centre of the roadway. The slowly-moving touring-car, hemmed in by the languid midnight movement of the street, came to a full stop almost before where he stood. It shuddered and panted there, leviathan-like, and Durkin saw the sea breeze sway back the canopy drapery.

He followed the direction of the excited young Chicagoan's gaze, smilingly, now, and with a singularly disengaged mind.

He saw the woman's clear profile outlined against the floating purple curtain, the quiet and shadowy eyes of violet, the glint of the chestnut hair that showed through the back-thrust folds of the white silk automobile veil swathing the small head, and the nervous, bird-like movement of the head itself.

He did not move; there was no involuntary, galvanic reaction; no sudden gasp and flame of wonder. He simply held his cigarette still poised in his fingers, half-way to his lips, with the minutest relaxing of the smile that still hovered about them, while a dull and ashen grayness crept into his face, second by waiting second.

It was not until his eyes met hers that he took three wavering and undecided steps toward her.

With a silent movement—more of warning than of fright, he afterward told himself—she pressed her gloved

fingers to her lips. What her intent eyes meant to say to him, in that wordless, telepathic message, Durkin could not guess; all thought was beyond him. But in a moment or two the roadway cleared, the car shook and plunged forward, the floating curtains fluttered and trailed behind.

Durkin turned blindly, and pushed and ran and dodged through the languidly amazed promenaders, following after that sudden and bewildering vision, as after his last hope in life. But the fine, white, limestone Riviera dust from the fading car's tire-heels, and the burnt gases from its engines, were all the road held for him, as it undulated off into hillside quietnesses.

He heard the young Chicagoan calling after him, breathless and anxious. But he ran on until he came to a side street, shadowed with garden walls and villas and greenery. Slipping into this, he immured himself in the midnight silences, to be alone with the contending forces that tore at him.

If his companion was right, and such things as this made up romance, then, after all, the drama of life had lost none of its bewilderment. For the woman he had seen between the floating purple curtains was his own wife.

II

THE SHADOWING PAST

DURKIN's first feeling was a passion to lose and submerge himself in the muffling midnight silences of those outwardly quiet gardens, at heart so old in sin and pain. Then, as intelligence slowly emerged from the partial anesthesia of utter bewilderment, his blind, indeterminate rage fell away before practical question and cross-question. Painfully, yet cautiously, he directed his ceaseless artillery of interrogation toward the dark walls of uncertainty so blankly confronting him.

It was not that he had been consumed by any immediate sense of loss, of deprivation. If a rage had burned

through him at the sight of his wife thus secretly and startlingly masquerading in an unknown rôle, and an equally unknown automobile, it was far from being a rage of immediate jealousy and distrust. They had, in other days, each passed through questionable and perilous experiences. They had, alone and together, adventured along many of the more dubious channels of life. They had reaped and sown and become weary of it. They had struggled up toward respectability; they had fought for fair-dealing; they had entered a compact to stand by each other through that long and bitter effort to be tardily honest and autumnally aboveboard. What had so disturbed him was the sudden sense of something impending, the vague apprehension of some momentous and far-reaching intrigue which he could not even foreshadow.

But, above all, what had brought about the sudden change? Why was she, the passionate pleader for the decencies of life whom he had last watched so patiently and heroically imparting the mastery of the piano-forte to seven little English children in a squalid Paris *pension*, now lapsing back into the old and fiercely abjured avenue of irresponsibility? Why had she weakened and surrendered, when he himself, the weakling of the two, had clung so desperately to the narrow path of rectitude? And what was the meaning and the direction of it all? And what would it lead to? And why had she kept silent, and given him no warning?

Durkin looked up and listened to the soft rustling of the palm branches. Through an air that seemed heavy with languid tropicality, and the waiting richness of life, he caught the belated glimmer of lights and the throb and murmur of music. It carried in to him what seemed the essential and alluring note of all the existence he had once known and lived. Yet day by day he had fought back that siren call. It had not always been an open victory—the weight of all the past lay too heavily upon him for that—but

for her sake he had at least vacillated and hesitated and temporized, waiting and looking for that ultimate strength which would come with her first wistful note of warning.

Yet here was Opportunity lying close and thick about him; here Chance had laid the board for its most tempting game. In that way, as the young Chicagoan had said, they stood in the centre of the world. But he had turned away from those clustering temptations, he had left unbroken his veneer of honorable life for her sake—while she herself had surrendered, unmistakably, irrevocably, whatever strange form that surrender may have taken.

While everything remained still so maddeningly enigmatic, he raked through the tangled past in search of some casual seed of explanation for the undeciphered present.

He recalled, period by period, and scene by scene, his kaleidoscopic past career, his first fatal blunder as a Grand Trunk telegraph operator, when one slip of the wrist brought a gravel train head on into a through freight, his summary dismissal from the railroad, and his unhappy flight to New York, his passionate struggle to work his way up once more, his hunger for money and leisure, that his long dreamed of photo-telegraphy apparatus might be perfected and duly patented, his consequent fall from grace in the Postal-Union offices, through holding up certain racing returns until he and his outside confederate had been able to make their illicit wagers, then his official ostracism, and his wandering street-cat life, when the humbling and compelling pinch of poverty had turned him to "overhead guerrilla" work and the dangers and vicissitudes of a poolroom key operator. He recalled his chance meeting with MacNutt, the wire-tapper, and their partnership of privateer forces in that strange campaign against Penfield, the alert and opulent poolroom king, who seemed always able to defy the efforts and offices of a combative and equally alert district-attorney.

Most vividly and minutely of all, he reviewed his first meeting with Mabel Candler, and the bewilderment that had filled him when he discovered her to be an intimate and yet a reluctant associate with MacNutt in his work—a bewilderment which lasted until he himself grew to realize how easy was the downward trend when once the first false step had been made. He brought back to mind their strange adventures and perils and escapes together, day by day and week by week, their early interest that ripened into affection, their innate hatred of that underground life, which flowered into open revolt and flight, their impetuous marriage, their precipitate journey from the shores of America.

Then came to him what seemed the bitterest memories of all. It was the thought of that first too fragile happiness which slowly but implacably merged into discontent, still hidden and tacit, but none the less evident. That interregnum of peace had been a Tantalus-like taste of a draught which he all along knew was to be denied him. Yet, point by point, he recalled their first quiet and hopeful weeks in England, when their old ways of life seemed as far away as the America they had left behind, when they still had unbounded faith in themselves and in the future. Just how or where fell the first corroding touch he could never tell. But in each of them there had grown up a secret unrest—it was, he knew, the hounds of habit whimpering from their kennels. So it was, then, that they had tried to drug their first rising doubts with the tumult of incessant travel and change. His wife had lured him to secluded places, she had struggled to interest him in a language or two, she had planned quixotic courses of reading—as though a man such as he might be remolded by a few months of modern authors!—and carried him off to centres of gaiety—as though the beat of Hungarian bands and outlandish dances could drive that inmost fever out of his blood!

He endured Aix-les-Bains and its

rheumatics for a fortnight; then they fled to the huddled little hotels and *pensions* of the narrow and dark wooded valley of Karlsbad, where, amid Brahmins from India and royalty from Austria and audacious young duchesses from Paris and students from Petersburg and Berlin, and undecipherable strangers from all the remotest corners of the globe, it seemed to Durkin they were at last alone. He confided this feeling to Mame, one tranquil morning after they had drunk their Sprudel from long-handled cups, at the spring where the comely, rubber-garmented native girls caught and doled out the biting hot spray of the geyser. They were seated at the remoter end of the glass-covered Promenade, and a band was playing. Something in the music, for once, had saddened and dispirited Mame.

"Alone?" she had retorted. "Who is ever alone?"

"Well, our wires are down, for a little while, anyway!" laughed Durkin, as he sipped the hot salt water from the china cup. It reminded him, he had said, of all his past sins in epitome. Mame sighed wearily, and did not speak for a minute or two.

"But, after all," she said at last, in a meditative calmness of voice. "there are always some sort of ghostly wires connecting us with one another, holding us in touch with what we have been and done, with our past, and with our ancestors, with all our forsaken sins and misdoings. No, Jim, I don't believe we are ever alone. There are always sounds and hints, little broken messages and whispers, creeping in to us along those hidden circuits. We call them intuitions, and sometimes character, and sometimes heredity, and weakness of will—but they are there, just the same!"

The confession of that mood was a costly one, for before the week was out they had, in some way, wearied of the sight of that daily procession of nephritics and neurotics, and were off again, like a pair of homeless swallows, to the Rhine salmon and the Black Forest venison of Baden. From

there they fled to the mountain air of St. Moritz, where they were frozen out and driven back to Paris—but always spending freely and thinking little of the vague tomorrow. Durkin, indeed, recognized that taint of the criminal in his veins. He was a spendthrift; he had none of the temperamental foresight and frugality of his wife, who reminded him, from time to time, and with ever-increasing anxiety, of their ever-melting letter of credit. But, on the other hand, she stood ready to sacrifice everything, in order to build some new wall of interest about him, that she might immure him from his past. She still planned and schemed to shield him, not so much from the world, as from himself. Yet he had seen, almost from the first, that their pursuit of contentment was born of their common and ever-increasing terror of the future. Each left unuttered the actual emptiness and desolation of life, yet each nursed the bitter sting of it.

Then, under the softly-waving palms of that midnight garden, Durkin relived their feverish past, month by remembered month, until they found the need of money staring them in the face, and their increasing dilemma, until, eventually, he had left her in her squalid Paris *pension* with her music pupils and the last eighty francs, while he clutched at the passing straw of an exporting house clerkship in Marseilles. The exporting house, which was under American guidance, had flickered and gone out ignominiously, and week by desperate week each new promise of honest work seemed to wither into a chimera at his feverish touch. And then he had found himself at Monte Carlo, waiting for word from Paris, fighting against a grim new temptation which, vampire-like, had grown stronger and stronger as its victim daily had grown weaker and weaker.

For along the sea-front, one indolent and golden afternoon, he had learned that an American yacht in the harbor was sending ashore for a practical electrician, since a defective generator

had left its globe-strewn cabins in sudden darkness. Durkin, after a brief talk with the second officer, had been taken aboard the tender and hurried out to where the lightless steamer rocked and swung at her anchor chain in the intense turquoise bay.

As he looked over the armature core—it was of the slotted drum type, he at once perceived, built up of laminations of soft steel painted to break up eddy currents—and as he tested the soft amber mica insulation about the commutators of hard-rolled copper, he knew that the defective generator could be repaired in three-quarters of an hour. But certain scraps of talk that came to his ears amid the clink of glasses, from one of the shadowy saloons, had stung into sudden activity his old, irrepressible curiosity.

It was uncommonly pleasant, he had told himself as he had caught the first drone of the lowered, confidential voices, to hear the old home talk, and even broken snatches of old home interests. But as he explored the ship and minutely examined automatic circuit-breaker and switchboard and fuse, he made it a point to see that his explorations took him into the pantry-like cabin next to the saloon from which these droning voices drifted. As he gave apparently studious and unbroken attention to a stretch of defective wiring, he was in fact making careful mental note of each question and answer and suggestion that passed between that quietly talking group. One of the talkers, he soon found, was a Supreme Court judge on his vacation, equable and deliberative in his occasional query or view or criticism; another was apparently a secret agent from the office of the New York district-attorney, still another two were either Scotland Yard men or members of some continental detective bureau—this Durkin assumed from their broad-voweled English voices and their seemingly intimate knowledge of European criminal procedure. The fifth man he could in no way place. But it

was this man who interrupted the others, and, apparently taking a slip of paper from some inside pocket or some well-closed wallet, read aloud a list which, he first explained, had been secured from a certain safe the night of a certain raid.

"Three hundred and twenty shares of National Bank of Commerce," read the voice methodically, the reader checking off each item, obviously, as he went along. "One certificate of forty-seven shares of United States Steel Preferred; two certificates of one hundred shares each of Erie Railroad First Preferred; eighteen personal cheques, with names and amounts and banks attached; seven I. O. U.'s, with amounts and dates and initials."

"Probably worthless, from our point of view!" interposed a voice.

"Postal-Union Telegraph bonds, valued at \$102,345," went on the reading voice, and again the interrupting critic remarked: "Which, you see, we may regard as very significant, for it shows that the telegraph company and the poolroom are compelled to stand together!"

Durkin followed the list, with inclined head and uplifted hands, forgetting even his simulation of work, until the end was reached.

"In all, you see, one quarter of a million dollars in negotiable securities, if we are to rely on this memorandum, which, as I stated before, ought to be authentic, for it was taken from the Penfield safe the night of the first raid!"

Durkin started, as though the circuit with which his fingers absently toyed had suddenly become a live wire.

"Penfield!" The word sent a little thrill through his body. Penfield—the very name was a challenging trumpet to him. But again he bent and listened to the drone of the nearby voices.

"And Keenan, you say, is in Genoa?" asked one of the Englishmen.

"If he's not there now he will be during the week," answered the American. "All I know is that our Milan man secured duplicates of his cables.

Three of them were in cipher, but he was able to make sure of the Genoa trip!"

"It would be rather hard to get at him, *there!*"

"But if he strikes north, as you say, and goes first to Liverpool, and gets home by the back door, as it were, by taking a steamer to Quebec or Montreal——"

"That's a mere blind!"

"But why say that?"

"Because he's too wise to strike British territory before he unloads. It's not a mere matter of stopping the transfer of this stock, or whether or not all of it is negotiable. What we want is tangible and incriminating evidence. The signatures of those cheques are——"

That was the last word that came to Durkin's ears, for at that moment a steward, with a tray of glasses, hurried into the pantry. His suspicious eye saw nothing but a busy electrician replacing a switchboard. But before the intruding steward had departed the second officer was at Durkin's elbow, overlooking his labors, and no further word or hint came to the eavesdropper.

But he had heard enough. The flame had been applied to the dry acreage of his too arid and idle existence. As he gazed thoughtfully landward, where Monte Carlo lay vivid and glowing under the sheltering Alpes-Maritimes, like a golden lizard sunning itself on a shelf of gray rock, he felt within him a more kindly and comprehensive feeling for that flower-strewn arena of vast hazards. It was, after all, the great chances of life that made existence endurable. Its only anodyne lay in effort and feverish struggle. And his chance for activity had come!

Half an hour later he was rowed ashore, with a good Havana cigar between his teeth and three English sovereigns in his pocket. As he made his way up to his hotel he could feel some inner part of him still struggling and shrinking back from the enticing avenue of activity which his new knowledge was opening up before him.

He smiled, a little grimly, as he thought of those old, unnecessary scruples. He had been holding himself to a compact which no longer existed. And, all along, he had been regarding himself as the weakling, the vacillator, when it was he who had held out the longest! He had even, in those earlier hesitating moments, consolingly recalled to his mind how Monsieur Blanc's modestly denominated Société Anonyme des Bains de Mer et Cercle des Étrangers made it a point to proffer a railway ticket to any impending wreck, such as himself, who might drift like a stain across its roads of merriment, or leave a telltale blot upon one of its perennially beautiful and ever-odorous flower-beds. But now, as he reviewed those past weeks of hesitation and inward struggle, a sense of relapse crept over him. As he recalled the picture of the clear-cut profile between the floating purple curtains, a vague indifference as to the final outcome of things took possession of him. He almost exulted in the meaning of the strange meeting, which, one hour before, had seemed to bring the universe crashing down about his head. Then, as his plans and thoughts took more definite shape, his earlier recklessness merged into an almost pleasurable sense of relief and release, of freedom after confinement. He felt incongruously grateful for the lash that had awakened him to even illicit activity; life, under the passion for accomplishment, under the zest for risk and responsibility, seemed to take on its older and deeper meaning once more. It was, he told himself, as if the foreign tongue which he had so wearily heard on every side of him, for so long, had suddenly translated itself into intelligibility, or as if the text beneath the pictures in those ubiquitous illustrated papers from Paris, which he had studied so blankly and so blindly, had suddenly become as plain as his own English to him.

Yes, bring what it would, he would make the plunge! It was like emancipation to him—it was like springing headlong into the sea of liberty itself.

III

THE GREAT DIVIDE

DURKIN waited until, muffled and far away, the throb and drone of an orchestra floated up to him. This was followed, scatteringly, by the bells of the different *tables d'hôte*. They, too, sounded thin and remote, drifting up through the soft, warm air that had always seemed so exotic to him, so redolent of foreign-odored flowers, so burdened with alien-smelling tobacco smoke, of unfamiliar sea scents incongruously shot through with even the fumes of an unknown and indescribable cookery.

While that genial shrill and tinkle of many bells meant refreshment and most gregarious frivolity for the chattering, loitering, laughing and ever-spectacular groups so far below him—and how he hated their outlandish gibberish and their arrogant European aloofness!—it meant for him hard work, and hard work of a somewhat perilous and stimulating nature.

For, as the last of the demurely noisy groups made their way through the deepening twilight to the different hotels and cafés that already spangled the hillsides with scattering clusters of light, Durkin coolly removed his shoes, twisted and knotted his two bath towels into a stout rope, securely tied back his heavy French window-shutter of wood with one of his sheets, and having attached his improvised rope to the base of the shutters, swung himself deftly out. On the return swing he caught the cast-iron water-pipe that scaled the wall from window tier to window tier. Down this jointed pipe he went, gorilla-like, segment by segment, until he reached what he knew to be the hotel's third floor. Here he rested for a moment or two against the wall, feeling inwardly grateful that a Mediterranean climate still made possible Monaco's primitive outside plumbing—to the initiated, he inwardly remarked, such things had always their unlooked-for advantages. He also felt both relieved and

grateful to see that the two windows between him and his destination had been left shuttered against the heat of the afternoon sun. The third window, he could see, was not, although, as he had expected, the sash was securely locked.

Once convinced of this, he dropped down, stealthily, and lay full length on the balcony flooring, with his ear close against the casement woodwork, listening. Reasonably satisfied, he rose to his knees, and took from his vest pocket a small diamond ring. Holding this firmly between his thumb and forefinger, he described a semicircle on the heavy window-glass. He listened again, intently. Then he took a small cold-chisel from still another pocket, and having cut away the putty at the base of the semicircle, smote the face of the glass one sharp little tap.

It cracked neatly, along the line of the circling diamond-scratch, so that, with the help of a suction cap made from the back of a kid glove, he was able to draw out the loosened segment of glass. Then he waited and listened still again. As he thrust in through the little opening a cautiously exploring hand the casual act seemed to take on the dignity of a long-considered ritual. It was a ceremonial moment to him, he felt, for it marked his transit, across some narrow moral divide, from lonely ascent to lonely decline. The impression stayed with him only a second. He turned back to his work, with a reckless little up-thrust of each resolute shoulder. His searching fingers found the old-fashioned window lever, of hammered brass, and on this he pressed down and back, quietly. A moment later the sash swung slowly out, and he was inside the room, closing the shutters and then the window after him.

He stood there, in the dark quietness, for what must have been a full minute. Then he took from his pocket a box of wax matches. He had purchased them for the purpose, from the frugal old woman who month by month and season by season carried on her quiet

trade at the foot of the Casino steps, catching, as it were, the tiny drippings from the flaring tapers in that Temple of Gold. And day after day, one turn of the roulette wheel took and gave more money than all her years of frugal trade might amass!

Taking one of the vestas, he struck a light, and holding it above his head, carefully examined the room, from side to side. Then he tiptoed to a door, which stood ajar. This, he saw by a second match, was a sleeping-room; and the two rooms, obviously, made up the suite. A door, securely locked, opened from the sleeping-room into the outer hallway. The door which opened from the larger room was likewise locked, but to make assurance doubly sure Durkin slid a second inside bolt, for already his quick eye had caught the gleam of its polished brass, just below the door-knob of the ordinary mortised lock. Then, groping his way to the little switchboard, he touched a button, and the room was flooded with light. He first looked about, carefully but quickly, and then glanced at his watch. He had at least two hours in which to do his work. Any time after that Pobloff might return. And by midnight at least the prince's valet would be back from Nice, to begin packing his master's boxes.

He slipped into the bedroom, and took from the bed a blanket and comforter. These he draped above the hall door, to muffle any chance sound. Then he turned to the northeast corner of the room, where stood what seemed to be a dressing cabinet, with little shelves and a plate-glass mirror above it. The lower part of it was covered by a polished rosewood door.

One sharp twist and pry with his cold-chisel forced this flimsy outer door away from its lock. Beneath it, thus lightly masked, stood the more formidable safe door itself. Durkin drew in a sharp breath of relief as he looked at it with critical eyes. It was not quite the sort of thing he had expected. If it had been a combination lock he had intended to tear away the wood-

work covering it, pad the floor with the bed mattress, and then pry it over on its face, to chisel away the cement that he knew would lie under its vulnerable sheet-iron bottom. But it was an ordinary, old-fashioned lock and key "Mennlicher," Durkin at the first glance had seen—the sort of strong box which a Third avenue cigar seller, at home, would not keep on his premises. Yet this was the deposit vault for which hotel guests, such as Prince Ignace Slevenski Pobloff, paid ten francs a day extra.

The sound of footsteps passing down the hallway caused the intruder to come to a sudden pause. He turned quickly, waited, and came to a quick, new decision. Before doing so, however, he reexamined the room more critically. This Prince Ignace Slevenski Pobloff was, obviously, a man of taste. He was also a man of means—and Durkin wondered if in that fact alone lay the reason why a certain young Belgian adventuress had followed him from Tangier to Algeciras, and from Algeciras to Gibraltar, and from Gibraltar still on to the Riviera. She had, at any rate, not followed a scentless quarry. He was not the mere curled and perfumed impostor so common to that little principality of shams. Even the garrulous young Chicagoan, from whom Durkin had secured his first Casino tickets, was able to vouch for the fact that Pobloff was a true *boyard*. He was also something or other in the imperial diplomatic service—just what it was Durkin could not at the moment remember.

So the intruder, opening and closing drawers as he went, glanced quickly but appreciatively at the highly emblazoned cards lying on the little red-leather-covered writing-table, at the litter of papers bearing the red and blue and gold of the triple-crowned double eagle, at the solid gold seal, at the row of splendid and regal-looking women in silver photograph holders, above the reading-desk, and a decanter or two of cut-glass. In one of the drawers of this desk he found

an ivory-handled revolver, a toy-like thirty-two caliber hammerless, of English make. Durkin glanced at it curiously, noticed that each chamber held its cartridge, turned it over in his hand, replaced it in the drawer, and after a moment's thought, took it out once more and slipped it into his hip pocket. Then his rapidly roving eye took in the sable top-coat flung carelessly across the foot of the bed, the neat little heelless Tunisian slippers beneath it, the glistening, military-looking boots, each carefully nursing its English shoe-tree, a highly embroidered smoking-cap, an ivory-handled shaving-set in its stamped morocco case, one razor for each day of the week, and the silver-mounted toilet bottles, so heavily chased.

Having, apparently, made careful mental note of the rooms, Durkin once more turned back to the switchboard, and prying loose the fluted molding that concealed the lighting-wires, he scraped away the insulating tissue and severed the thread of copper with a sweep or two of his narrow file. He felt safer, in that enforced darkness, for the work which lay before him.

The black gloom was punctuated by the occasional flare of a match, and the silence broken now and then, as he worked before the safe, by the metallic click and scrape of steel against steel, and by the muffled rasp and whine of his file against the wax-covered key which from time to time he fitted into the unyielding safe lock. As he filed and tested and refiled, with infinite care and patience, his preoccupied mind ranged vaguely along the channel of thought which the events of the last half-hour had opened up before him. He wondered why it was that Fortune should so favor those who stood the least in need of her smile. For four nights during the last seven, he knew, the prince had won, and won heavily, both in the Casino and in the Club Privé. Yet, on the other hand, there was the little Bulgarian princess with rooms just across the corridor from his own, and the rightful possessor of the plain little diamond with which he had

just cut his way into this more sumptuous chamber. For a week past now, down at the Casino, she had been losing steadily, as of course the vast and undirected majority always must lose. Even her solitaire earrings had been taken to Nice and pawned, Durkin knew. Three days before that, too, an ever-necessary maid had been tearfully discharged. At the Trente et Quarante table, as well, Durkin had watched her last thousand-franc note wither away. "And this, my dear, will mean another three months with my sweet old palsied Duc de la Houspignolle," she had laughingly yet bitterly exclaimed, in excellent English, to the impassive young Oxford man who was then dogging her heels. She was a wit, and she had a beautiful hand, even though she was no better than the rest of Monte Carlo, ruminated the safe-breaker easily, as he squinted, under the flare of a match, at the ward indentations in his wax-covered key-flange.

His thoughts went back, as he worked, to the timely yet unexpected scene at the stair-head, two hours before. There he had helped a slim young *femme de chambre* support the princess to her room, that royal lady having done her best to drown her ill fortune in absinthe and American highballs—which, he knew, was ever an impossible combination. She had collapsed at the head of the stairs, and as he had helped lift her he had first caught sight of the solitaire diamond on the limp and slender finger. It had been the one thing missing—and he was thankful that he had not taken the risk, as he had been prompted to do, of borrowing the young Chicagoan's scarfpin. It was a puny little diamond ring, of but three or four carats' weight, he mused, and yet with it had come the actual, if not the moral, turn in the tide of all his restless activities. It marked the moment when life seemed to fall back to its older and darker areas; it was the first diminutive milestone on his new road of adventure. But he would return the ring, of that he stoutly reassured himself, for he still nursed

his ironic sense of justice in the smaller things. Yes, he would return the ring, he repeated, with his ever-recurring inapposite scrupulosity, for the young princess was a lady of fortune under an unlucky star, like himself.

Durkin smiled a little, over his wax-covered key, as he still filed and fitted and listened. Then he gave vent to an almost inaudible "Ah!" for the bit of the key made the circuit, at last, and the wards of the lock clicked back into place.

He swung open the heavy iron door, cautiously, listened for a moment, and then struck another match. That Pobloff might have the bank-notes with him was a contingency; that he would carry about with him two thousand Napoleons was an absurdity. And Durkin knew the money had not been deposited—to ascertain that had been part of his day's work. The prince, of course, was a prodigal and free-handed gentleman—how much of his winnings had already leaked through his careless fingers it was impossible to surmise. Durkin even resented the thought of that extravagance—as though it were a personal and obvious injustice to himself. If it was all the fruit of blind chance, if it came thus unearned and accidental, why should he not have his share of it? Already Monte Carlo had taught him the mad necessity for money. But now, of all times, it was necessary to him. One-half, one-quarter, of the sum which this careless-eyed Slavic aristocrat had carried so jauntily away from the Trente et Quarante table would endow him with the means to plunge into the most appealing and the most perilous exploit of all his mottled career. If he regretted the underground and underhand steps through which that money could alone come into his possession, he consoled his still whimpering conscience with the claim that it was, after all, only a battle of wit against disinterested wit. For, self-delusively, he was beginning once more to regard all organized society and its ways as a mere inquisitorial

process which the adventurous could ignore and the keen-witted could circumvent.

Then he gave all his attention to the work before him, as he lifted from the safe, first a small steel despatch box, neatly initialed in gold, "I. S. P.," and then a packet of blue-tinted envelopes, held together by two rubber bands, and written on, here and there, in a language which the intruder assumed to be Russian. Next came a japanned-tin box, which proved to hold nothing but a file of quite unintelligible, Seidlitz-powder-colored papers, and then what seemed, to Durkin's exploring fingers, to be a few small morocco cases. The question flashed through his mind: What if, after all, the money he was looking for was not to be found? He struck still another match, with impatient hands. His first fever of audacity had burned itself out, and some indefinite cold reaction of disdain and disgust was setting in. Stooping low, he peered into the safe once more.

Then he gave a little sigh of relief. For there, behind a row of books that looked like small ledgers or journals, he caught sight of a stout leather bag, tied with a corded silk rope. He dropped the burned-out end of the match, and thrusting in an arm, lifted out the bag. As he placed it on the floor the muffled clink of metal smote on his ear. He wiped the sweat from his forehead, with a sense of relief. He had risked too much to go away empty-handed.

He tore at the carefully knotted cord, first with his fingers and then with his teeth. It was not so heavy as he had hoped it might be. On more collected second thoughts, indeed, it was woefully light. But the knot defied his efforts. He took out a second match, and was on the point of striking it. Instead of doing so, he stood suddenly erect, and then backed noiselessly into the remotest corner of the room. For a key had been thrust into the lock of the ante-room door, and already the handle was being slowly turned back.

Durkin's breath quickened and shortened, and his hand swung back to his hip pocket. Then he waited, with his revolver in his hand.

He counted and weighed his chances, quickly, one by one, as he stood there, in the black silence. He caught the diffused glimmer of the reflected light from the outer room as the door opened and closed, sharply. But the momentary half-light did not give him a glimpse of who or what was before him, for in a second all was blackness again. His first uneasy thought was that it was a very artful move. He and that Other were alone there, in the utter darkness. Neither, now, would have the advantage. He had been a fool to leave one of the doors without its double lock, of some sort. He had once been told that it was always through the more trivial contingency that the criminal was ultimately trapped.

He strained his ears, and listened. He could hear nothing. Yet he was positive that he could feel some approaching presence. It may have been a minute vibration of flooring; it may have been through the operation of some occult sixth sense. But he was sure of that mysterious Other, coming closer and closer to him.

Suddenly something seemed to stir and move in the darkness. He crouched, with every nerve and muscle ready, and a moment later he would have relieved the tension with some sort of cry, had he not realized that it was the wooden Swiss clock above the cabinet, beginning to strike the hour.

The sound came to an end, and Durkin was assuring himself that it could now be neither Pobloff nor the valet, when a second sound sent a tingle of apprehension through his frame.

It was the blue spurt of a match that suddenly cut the blackness before him. The fool—he was striking a light. Durkin crouched lower, and watched the flame as it grew on the darkness. The direct glare of it made him blink a little, but he swung his revolver barrel just above it, and a little to the

right. He was more confident now, and quite collected.

As it flowered into wider flame the match was held higher. Durkin could see the tiny rose-like glow between the phalanges of the fingers shielding the light. Then, of a sudden, a face grew out of the blackness, a white face shadowed by a plumed hat.

Durkin lowered his revolver, slowly, inch by inch. It was his wife who stood there in the darkness, not six paces away from him.

"*You!*" he gasped involuntarily, incredibly. Sheer wonder survived his instinctive recoil. It was the bolt, striking twice in the same spot.

The two white faces looked at each other, gaped at each other, insanely. He could see her breath come and go, shortly, and the deathly pallor of her face, and the relaxed lower jaw that had fallen a little away from the drooping upper lip. But she neither moved nor spoke. The match burned to her finger-ends, and fell to the floor. Darkness enveloped them again.

"*You!*" he repeated vacuously. The blackness and the silence seemed to blanket and smother him, like something tangible to the touch. He took three steps toward where she still stood motionless, and in an agonized whisper cried out to her:

"*My God, Mame, what is it?*"

IV

THE WOMAN SPEAKS

"*Ssssh!*" said the woman under her breath, as she clutched at Durkin's arm.

He shook her hand off, impatiently, although the act seemed at cross-purposes with his own will.

"But you—here!" he still gasped.

"Oh, Jim!" she half-moaned, inadequately.

"What's it mean! How'd you get here?"

He could hear her shuddering, in-drawn sigh.

"What, in the name of heaven, do

you want in here? Why don't you speak?"

There was a moment of unbroken silence.

"What are *you* doing here?" she demanded at last.

He responded, even in his mood of hot antagonism, to some note of ever-sustained appeal about her. Even through the black gloom that blanketed and blinded him some phantasmal and sub-conscious circuit, like the imaginary circuit of a multiplex telegraph system, seemed to carry to his mind some secondary message, some thought that she herself had not uttered. A wave of sympathy obliterated his resentment. He caught her in his arms, hungrily, and kissed her abandonedly. He noticed that her skin was cold and moist.

"Oh, Jim," she murmured again, weakly. Then she added, with a little catch of the breath, "Turn on the lights, quick!"

"I can't," he told her. "I've cut the wires."

He felt at her blindly, through the muffling blackness. She was shaking a little now, on his arm.

"Why didn't you write?" she pleaded pitifully.

"I did write—three times. Then I telegraphed!"

"Not a word came!" she cried.

"Then I wrote twice to London!"

"And *those* never came. Oh, everything was against me!" she moaned.

"But how did you get here?" he still demanded.

She did not answer his question. Instead, she asked him: "Where did you send the Paris letters?"

"To 11 bis avenue Beaucourt."

She groaned a little, impatiently.

"That was foolish—I wrote you that I was leaving there—that I *had* to go! I was put out. There wasn't a penny left—the pupils I had gave up their lessons. What they had heard or found out I don't know. Then I got a tiny room in the rue de Sèvres. I sold my last thing, then our wedding ring, even, to get it."

"And then what?"

"I still waited—I thought you would know, or find out, and that in some way or other I should still hear from you. I would have gone to the police, or advertised, but I knew it wouldn't be safe."

Once more the embittering consciousness of some dark coalition of forces against them swept over him. Fate, at every step, had frustrated them.

"But here—how did you get here—and what's this Lady Boxspur business?" he still insisted.

"Yes, yes," she almost moaned, "if you'll only wait I'll tell you. But is it safe to stay here? Have you thought where we are?"

"Yes; it's safe, quite safe, for an hour yet."

"Why didn't you send me money, or help me?" she asked, in her dead and unhappy monotone.

"I did, eighty francs, all I had. I hadn't a penny left. I didn't know the damned language. I prowled about like a cat in a strange garret, but I tried everything, from the American consul at Nice to a *Herald* correspondent at San Remo. Then I got word of a consumptive young writer from New York, at Mentone—but he died the day I was to meet him. Then I heard of the new Marconi station up the coast, and worked at wireless for two weeks, and made twenty dollars, before they sacked me for not being able to send a message out to a Messina fruit-steamer, in Italian. Then I chanced on the job of doctoring up a generator on an American yacht down here in the bay. When I was on board at work I overheard a Supreme Court judge and a special agent from the Central Office in New York and two English detectives talking over the loss of the Penfield securities."

"Penfield securities! What are they?"

"When the district-attorney's men raided Penfield's New York gambling club, it seems, one of Penfield's new men got away with all his papers. They had been withdrawn from the Fifth Avenue Safe Deposit Company,

for they were mostly cheques and negotiable securities, worth about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. But beyond all their face value, they constituted *prima facie* evidence against the gambler. They were smuggled to New Jersey. There the Jersey City chief of police took action, and this agent of Penfield's carried the documents across the North River and up to Stamford. From there he got back to New York again, by night, where he met a second agent, who had secured passage on the *Slavonia* for Naples. The first man is MacNutt."

"MacNutt!" ejaculated the listening woman.

"Yes, MacNutt! He compromised with Penfield and swung in with him when the district-attorney started pounding at them both. The second man is a shyster lawyer named Keenan, who was disbarred for conspiracy in the Brayton divorce case. Keenan and his papers are due at Genoa on Friday. I found some of this out on board the yacht. I thought it over—and it was too much for me. I couldn't stand out against it all, any longer. I thought I could make the plunge, without your ever knowing it—and perhaps get enough to keep you out of any more messes like this!"

"It would have been too late!" she said, in her dead voice. "It's too late already!"

"Then you don't care?" he demanded.

"I'll never complain, or whine, again!" she answered with dreary listlessness.

"Then why are you in this room?"

"I mean that I've given up myself. I'm in it, now, as deep as you! I couldn't fight it back any longer—it had to come!"

"But why, and how? Why don't you explain?"

He could feel her groping away from him in the darkness.

"Wait," she whispered. "That second room door is still unlocked, and there's danger enough here, without inviting it."

He groped after her into the bed-

room. He could hear the gentle scrape of the key and the muffled sound of the lock as she turned it, followed by the cautious slide of the brass bolt, lower on the door. He waited for her, standing at the foot of the bed. He could hear her sigh of weariness as she sat down on the edge of the disordered mattress. Then, remembering that he had cut the wires of only the larger room, he felt his way to the button at the head of the bed. He snapped the current open and instantly the blinding white light flooded the chamber.

"Is it safe here, any longer?" she asked restlessly, pausing a moment to blink up at him with studious eyes. He saw the look of troubled concern, of unspoken pity, that crept over her face; and he turned away brusquely.

"Yes, it's perfectly safe. So sit there and tell me what you have to say. It doesn't mean any greater risk. We would only have to come back again—for I've work to do in this room yet!"

The return of the light seemed to give a new cast of practicality to his thoughts.

"What sort of work?" his wife was asking him.

"Seventeen hundred Napoleons in gold to find," he answered grimly.

"Oh, it's not that, not *that*!" she said, starting up. "It's the papers, the Gibraltar papers!"

"Papers?" he repeated wonderingly.

"Yes, the imperial specifications. Pobloff's a paid agent in the French secret service. They say he was the man who secured Kitchener's Afghanistan frontier plans, and in some way or other had a good deal to do with the Curzon resignation. A year ago last March he was arrested in Jamaica, by the British authorities, for securing secret photographs of the Port Royal fortifications. They court-martialed one of the non-commissioned officers for helping him get an admission to the fortress, but the officer shot himself, and Pobloff had the plates spirited away, so the case fell through. Now he's got duplicates of every Upper

Gallery and every new fortification of the Rock at Gibraltar."

"But why waste time over these things?"

"Pobloff got them from an English officer's wife. She was weak—and worse—she lost her head over him. I can't tell you more now. But there is an order for five hundred pounds waiting for me at the British Embassy, in Rome, from the Foreign Office, if I secure those papers!"

"That's twenty-five hundred dollars?"

"Yes, almost."

"And I was on the point of crawling away with a few Napoleons!" said Durkin in a whisper. He began to succumb to the intoxication of this rapidity of movement which life was once more taking on. He was speed-mad, like a motorist on a white and lonely road. Yet an ever-recurring dismay and distrust of the end kept coming to him.

"But how did you come to find all this out? What happened after the rue de Sèvres?"

"Oh, it was all easy and natural enough, if I could only put it into words. After a few days, when I was hungry and sick, I went to one of the English hotels. I would have taken anything, even a servant's work, I believe. But I was lucky. One afternoon I stumbled on a weeping lady's maid, on the verge of hysterics, who found enough confidence in me, in time, to tell me that her mistress had gone mad in her room and was clawing down the wallpaper and talking about killing herself. It was true enough, in a way, I soon found out, for it was an English noblewoman who had fought with her husband two weeks before in London, and had run away to Paris. What she had dipped into, and gone through, and suffered, I could only guess; but I know this: that that afternoon she had drunk half a pint of raw alcohol when the frightened maid had locked her in the bath-room. So I pushed in and took charge. First I wired to the woman's husband, Lord Boxspur, who sent me money, at

once, and an order to bring her home as quietly as possible. He met us at Calais. It was a terrible ordeal for me, all through, for she tried to jump overboard in the Channel, and was so insane, so hopelessly insane, that a week after we reached London she was committed to some sort of private asylum."

"And then?" asked Durkin.

"Then Boxspur thought that possibly I knew too much for his personal comfort. I rather think he looked on me as dangerous. He put me off and put me off, until I was glad to snatch at a position in a next-of-kin agency. But in a fortnight or two I was even more glad to leave it. Then I went back to Lord Boxspur, who this time sent me helter-skelter back to Paris, to bribe a blackmailing newspaper woman from giving the details of his wife's misfortunes to the Continental correspondent of a London weekly. But even when that was done, and I had been duly paid for my work, I was only secure for a few weeks, at the outside. So, when things began to get hopeless again, I went to the British Embassy. I had to lie, terribly, before I could get an audience, first with a private secretary, and then with the ambassador himself. He said that he regretted he could do nothing for me, at least, officially. He looked at my clothes, and laughed a little, and said that of course, in cases of absolute destitution he sometimes felt compelled to come to the help of his fellow-countrymen. I told him that I knew the world, and was willing to undertake work of any sort. He answered that such cases were usually looked after at the consulate, and advised me to go there. But I didn't give him up, at once. I told him I was resourceful, and experienced, and might undertake even minor official tasks for him, until I had heard from my husband. Then he hesitated a little, and asked me if I knew the Continent well, and if I was averse to traveling alone. Then he called somebody up on his telephone, and in a few minutes came out and

shook his head doubtfully, and advised me to apply at the consulate. Instead of that, I went not to the English, but to the American consul first. He told me that in five weeks a sea-captain friend of his was sailing from Havre to New York, and that it might not be impossible to have me carried along. That was the best he could do. Then I went to the British consul. He spoke about references, which left me blank; and tried to pump me, which left me frightened. But he could do nothing, he told me, except in the way of a personal donation, and that, he assumed, was out of the question. So I went back to the Embassy once more. I don't know why, but this time, for some reason or other, the ambassador believed in me. He gave me a week's trial as a sort of second deputy private secretary, indexing three-year-old correspondence and copying Roumanian agricultural reports. Then he put me on ordinance report work, and in return for this I rummaged through an old closet in my temporary office and looped his telephone wire with twenty feet of number twelve wire from a broken electric fan, and an unused transmitter. Then, scrap by scrap, I picked up my first inklings of what was at that moment worrying the Foreign Office and the people at the Embassy as well. It was the capture of the Gibraltar specifications by Prince Slevenski Pobloff. When a Foreign Office secret agent telephoned in that Pobloff had been seen in Nice, I fought against the temptation for half a day, then I went straight to the ambassador and told him what I knew, but not how I came to know it. He gave me two hundred francs and a ticket to Monte Carlo, with a letter to deliver in Rome, if by any chance I should succeed."

"That would give us the show we want! *That* would give us a chance!"

She did not understand him. "A chance for what?"

Durkin was pacing up and down the small room in his stocking feet, looking at her, from time to time, with a detached, but ever studiously alert

March 1906

glance. Then he came to a stop, and confronted her. The memory of the night before, in the Promenade, with the sudden glimpse of her profile against the floating automobile curtain, came back to his mind, with a stab of pain.

"But what has all this to do with Lady Boxspur?" he demanded darkly, wondering how long he should be able to have faith in that inner, unshaken integrity of hers which had passed through so many trials and survived so many calamities. But she hurried on, as though unconscious of both his tone and his attitude.

"That has more to do with the next-of-kin agency. I left it out, of course, but if you must know it now, and here, I can tell you in a word or two."

"One naturally wants to know when one's wife ascends into the aristocracy—and Mercedes automobiles!"

"Oh, Jim, surely you and I don't need to go back to all that sort of thing, at this stage of the game," she retorted wearily. She felt wounded, weighed down with a perverse sense of injury and injustice at his treatment, even in the face of the incongruous circumstances under which they had met.

But she went on speaking, resolutely, as though to purge her soul, for all time, of explanation and excuse.

"That next-of-kin agency was a dingy little office up two dingy stairs in Chancery Lane. For a few days their work seemed bearable enough, though it hurt me to see that all their income was being squeezed out of miserably poor people—always the miserably poor, the submerged souls with romantic dreams of impending good fortune, which, of course, always just escaped them. That, I could endure. But when I found that the agency was branching out, and was actually trying to present me for inspection as a titled heiress, in sore need of a secret and immediate marriage, I revolted, at once. Then they calmly proposed that I embark for America as a bogus countess—and while they were still talking and debating what mild and strictly limited extravagances they would stand for,

and just what expenses they would allow, I bolted! But their scheming and plotting had given me the hint, for I knew, if the worst came to the worst, I would not be altogether under the thumb of Lord Boxspur. So when I came South from Paris I simply assumed the title—it simplified so many things. It both gave me opportunities and protected me. If, to gain my ends and to reconnoitre my territory, I became the guest—remember, Jim, the most discreet and guarded guest!—of Count Anton Szapary—who carried a hundred thousand crowns away from the Vienna Jockey Club a month or two ago—you must simply try to make the end justify the means. One of his automobiles was always politely placed at my disposal. It was a chance, well, scarcely to be missed. For, you see, it was my intention to meet His Highness, the Prince Ignace Slevenski Pobloff, under slightly different circumstances than would prevail if he and his valet should quietly step through that door at the present moment!"

She laughed, a little bitterly, with a reckless shrug of the insouciant shoulders. Durkin did not like the sound of that laugh. Then, as he looked at her more critically, he saw that she was white and worn and tired. But it was the words over which she had laughed which sent him abruptly hurrying into the next room with a lighted match, to read the hour from the little Swiss clock above the cabinet.

"If we're after anything here we've got to get it!" he said, with conscious roughness. "It's later than I thought."

"Very well," she answered, quietly enough. Then she turned to him, as he waited with his hand on the bedroom light-button, before turning it out.

"You need never be afraid that I will bother you with any more of my hesitations, and scruples, and half-timid qualms, as I once did. All that is over and done with. I feel, now, that we're both in this sort of work from necessity, and not by accident.

It has gripped and engulfed us, now, for good. There's no use quibbling and fighting against it. We've got to keep at it, and wring out of it what we can, and always go back to it, and bend to it, and still keep at it, to the bitter end!"

He looked at her white face for one moment, in silence, and then he snapped shut the button.

"We had better look through the safe at once," she said apathetically. Something in her tone, if not her words themselves, as she had spoken, sent a wave of what was almost startled misery through her husband. He already felt, although he felt it vaguely, the note of impending tragedy which she was so premonitorily sounding. It brought to him a dim and hurried vision of that far-off but inevitable catastrophe which lay, somewhere, at the end of the road they were traveling. Their only hope and solace, it seemed to him, must thereafter lie in feverish and sustained activity. They must lose themselves in the dash and whirl of daring moments. And it was not from pleasure or from choice, now; it was to live. They must act or perish; they must plot and counterplot, or be submerged. Yet he would do what he could to save himself, as she, in turn, must do what she could for herself—if they came to the end of their rope.

A minute later they were bending together over the contents of the dismantled safe. He was striking matches. By this time they were both on their knees.

"You run through these papers, while I see what can be done with the despatch box," he whispered to her. Then he put the little package of vestas between them, so that each might work by their own light. From time to time the soft spurt of the lighting match broke the silence, as Mame hurriedly ran her eye over the different packets, and as hurriedly flung them back into the safe. It was a relief to Durkin to think that he at least had someone beside him who could read French. Busy as he was, he incon-

gruously recalled to his mind how he once used to study the little printed announcements in his hotel rooms, wondering, ruefully, if the delphic text meant that lights and fires were extra, and if baths must be paid for, and vainly trying to discover what his last basket of wood would cost.

Yes, he told himself, he was a hunter out of his domain. He would always feel intimidated and insecure in this land of aliens and unknowns. He even sympathetically wondered who it was that had said: "Foreigners are fools!" Then a sudden, irrational, inconsequential sense of gratitude took possession of him, as he felt and heard the woman at work so close beside him. There was a feeling of companionship about it that made the double risk worth while.

"There's nothing here!" Mame was saying, under her breath.

"Then it *must* be the box!" he told her.

Durkin knew it was already too late to file and fit a skeleton key. His first impulse was to bury the box under a muffling pile of bedding and send a bullet or two through the lock. But his wandering eye caught sight of a Morocco sheath-knife above them on the wall, and a moment later he had the point of it under the steel-bound lid, and as he pried it flew open with a snap.

He waited, listening, and lighting matches, while Mame went through the papers, with nervous and agile fingers, mumbling the inscriptions as she hurriedly read and cast them away from her.

"I thought so!" she said at last, crisply.

The packet held half a dozen blue-prints, together with some twelve or fourteen sheets of plans and specifications, on tinted "flimsy." Durkin noticed they were drawn up in red and black ink, and that at the bottom of each document were paragraphs of finely-penned, scholarly-looking writing. One glance was enough for them both.

Mame refolded them and caught

them together with a rubber band. Then she thrust them into the bosom of her dress. Both rose to their feet, for both were filled with the selfsame sudden passion to get into the open once more.

"Is it worth while, taking that?" whispered Mame, for Durkin was stooping down again over the leather bag that held the Napoleons.

"We're in this for all we can get, aren't we?" he retorted, and she heard the chink and rattle of metal in the darkness.

Then she heard another sound, which caused her to catch quickly at Durkin's arm. It was the sound of a key turning in the lock, followed by an impatient little French oath, and the weight of a man's body against the resisting door. Then the oath was repeated, and a second key was turned, this time in the nearer door.

"It's Pobloff!" she whispered.

She had felt the almost galvanic, precautionary response of Durkin's body; now she could hear his whispered ejaculation as he clutched at her and thrust her back.

"You must get away, quick, whatever happens," he said hurriedly. There was a second tremor and rattle of the door; it might come in at any moment.

"Don't think of me," she whispered. "It's you!"

"But, my God, how'll you get out of this?" he demanded, in a quick whisper. He was trying to force her back into the little anteroom.

"No, no; don't!" she answered him. "I can manage it—more easily than you!"

"But how?"

He was still crowding and elbowing her back, as though mere retreat meant more assured safety.

"No, no!" she expostulated, under her breath. "I can shift for myself. It's you—you must get away!"

She was forcing the packet from her bosom into his hands.

"Take care of these, quick! Now here's the window ready. Oh, Jim, get away while you've got the chance!"

Even in that moment of peril the thought that she was still ready to face this much for him filled his shaken body with a glow that was more keenly exhilarating than wine itself. There was no time for words or demonstration: the action carried its own eloquence.

He was already halfway through the opened window, but he turned back.

"Do you care, then?" he panted.

He could hear the quick catch of her breath.

"Good or bad, I love you, Jim! You know that! Now, hurry, oh, hurry!"

He caught her hand in his—that was all there was time for—while with his free hand Durkin thrust the packet down into his pocket.

"If it turns out wrong—I mean if anything should happen to me, go straight to the Embassy with them, in Rome. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye," he whispered, as he slipped down on his hands and knees and crawled along the balcony, like a cat, through the darkness.

Then the woman closed the window, and waited.

V

"FOREIGNERS ARE FOOLS"

MABEL DURKIN, as she turned back into the darkness of the room, desperately schooled herself to calmness. She warned herself that above all she must remain clear-headed and collected and act coolly and decisively, when the moment for action arrived.

But as the seconds slipped by, and the silence remained unbroken, a shred of forlorn hope came back to her. Each moment meant more assured safety to her husband—he, at least, was getting away unscathed and unsuspected.

She still waited and listened. Perhaps, after all, the prince had taken his departure. Perhaps he had gone back to the porter's office, for explana-

tions. Perhaps it had not even been Pobloff—merely a drunken stranger, mistaken in his room number, or servants with a message or with linen.

She groped softly across the room, until she came to the door. She found it draped and covered with a heavy blanket. Holding this back, she slipped under it, and peered through the keyhole into the illuminated hallway. There seemed to be nobody outside.

"It is a rule of the game, I believe, never to shoot the rabbit until it is on the run!"

The words, spoken in excellent English, and barbed with a touch of angry cynicism, smote on her startled ears like an Alpine thunderclap.

She emerged from under the blanket slowly, ignominiously, incongruously ashamed of even her Peeping-Tom abandonment of dignity. As she did so she saw herself being looked at with keen but placid eyes. The owner of the eyes in one hand held a lighted bedroom lamp. In his other hand he held a flat, short-barreled pocket revolver, of burnished gun-metal, and she could see the lamplight glimmer along its side as it menaced her.

She did not gasp—nor did she shrink away, for with her the situation was not so novel as her antagonist might have imagined. Indeed, as she gazed back at him, motionless, she saw the look of increasing wonder which crept, almost involuntarily, over his white, lean, Slavonic-looking face.

Mabel Durkin knew it was Pobloff. He was tall, exceptionally tall, and she noticed that he carried off his faultlessness of attire with that stiff but tranquil *hauteur* which seems to come only with a military training. The forehead was high and white and prominent. The nose was long and narrow-bridged, and the face itself was unusually long and narrow, and now quite colorless. This gave a darker hue to the thin mustache and the trim imperial, through which she caught a glint of white teeth, in what seemed half a smile and half a snarl.

The hair was parted almost in the centre, a little to the right, and but for the pebbled shadows about the sunken, yet still bright eyes, he would be called a youthful-looking man. She understood why women would always speak of him as a handsome man.

"I am sorry, but I was compelled to force the bolt," he said slowly, with his enigmatic smile.

She still looked at him in silence, from under lowered brows. Her fingers were locking and unlocking nervously.

"And to what do I owe this visit?" he demanded mockingly.

She took a step backward. She could smell brandy on his breath.

"Your English is admirable!" she answered, as mockingly.

"As your energy!" he retorted, taking a step nearer the still open door. Then he looked about the room, slowly and comprehensively. On his face, in the strong sidelight, she could see mirrored each fresh discovery, as step by step he followed the course of the completed invasion. She followed his gaze, which now rested on the rifled safe.

Then he turned and strode into the anteroom, and she could hear him making fast and locking the outer hall door. Then he withdrew the key, and came back to her.

"I must still regard you, of course, as my guest," he said slowly, with his easy menace.

"You Europeans always give us lessons in the older virtues!" she retorted, as mockingly as before, in her soft contralto.

He looked at her, for a moment, in puzzled wonder. Then he held the lamp closer to her face. He nursed no allusions about women. Mabel Durkin knew that for years now he had made them his tools and his accomplices, never his dictators and masters. But as he looked into the pale face, with the shadowy, almost luminous violet eyes, and the soft droop of the full red lips, and the still girlish tenderness of line about the brow and chin, and then at the betraying fulness of throat and

bosom, the mockery died out of his smile.

It was supplanted by a look more ominously purposeful, more grimly determined.

"What, madam, did you come here for?" he demanded.

She shrugged an apparently careless shoulder.

"His Highness, the Prince Ignace Slevenski Pobloff, has always been the recipient of much flattering attention!" She found it still safest to mock him.

"We have had enough of this! What is it? Money? Or jewelry?"

She spurned the leather bag on the floor with the toe of her shoe. He could hear the clink and rattle of the Napoleons that followed the movement. He started suddenly forward and bent over the broken despatch box. His long white fingers were running dexterously through the once orderly little packets.

"Or something more important?" he went on, as he came to the end of his stock. Then he gave a little half-cry, half-gasp; and from the look on his face the woman saw that he realized what was missing. He looked at her, with alert and narrow eyes, for a full minute of unbroken silence. Then, with a little shoulder movement of finality, he turned away and put down the lamp.

"I regret it, but I must ask you for this—this document, without equivocation and without delay. Let there be no misunderstanding between us. I know precisely what you have taken; and it will be in my hands before you ever leave this room!"

She had a sense of destiny shaping itself before her, while she stood a helpless and disinterested spectator of the vague but implacable transformation which, in the end, must so concern her.

"I have nothing," she answered simply.

He waved her protest aside.

"Madam, have you thought, or do you now know, what the cost of this will be to you?"

He was towering over her now. She was wondering whether or not there

was a ghost of a chance for her to snatch at his pistol.

"I can pay only what I owe," she maintained evasively.

He looked at her, and then at the locked door. His face took on a sudden and crafty change. The rage and anger ebbed out of him.

"What greater crown may one hope for, in any activity of life, than a beautiful woman?" he asked quietly. There was a moment of silence.

For the first time a touch of fear came to her shadowy eyes, and they were veiled by a momentary look of furtiveness.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, madam, simply that you will now remain with me!"

"That is absurd!"

"It is not absurd; it is essential. Permit me. In my native country we have a secret order which I need not name. If the secrets of this order came to be known by an individual not already a member, one of two things happened. He either became a member of the order, or he became a man who could impart no information!"

"And that means——?"

"It means, practically, that from this hour you are, either willing or unwilling, a partner in my activities, as you now are in my possession of certain papers. Pardon me. The penalty may seem heavy, but the case, you will understand, is exceptional. Also, the nature of your visit, and the thoroughness of your preparations"—he swept the dismantled room with his grim but mocking glance—"have already convinced me that the partnership will not be an impossible one."

"But I repeat, this is theatrical, and absurd. You cannot possibly keep me a—a prisoner here, forever!"

He looked at her, and suddenly she shrank back from his glance, white to the lips.

"You will not be a prisoner, for then you would not be a partner. The coalition between us must be as silent as it is essential. But first, permit me!"

She still shrank back from his touch, consumed with a new and unlooked-for fear of him. And all the while she was telling herself that she must remain calm, and make no mistake. The remembrance came to her, as she stood there, of how she had once thought it possible to approach him in a more indirect and adroit fashion, as the wayward and life-loving Lady Boxspur. She shuddered a little, as she recalled that foolish mistake, and pictured the perils into which it might have led her. She could smell more clearly now the odor of brandy on his quickening breath. His face, death-like in its pallor, flashed before and above her like a semaphoric sign of imminent danger.

"I want a drink," she gasped, with a movement toward the cabinet.

He turned and caught up the heavy glass brandy-decanter, emitting a nervous and irresponsible laugh, as he filled a tumbler half-full. As he did so the terrified woman ran to the door over which still swung the shrouding blanket. She knew the key had already been turned in the lock, from the outside; the only thing between her and the freedom of the open hall was one small bolt shaft.

But before she could open the door Pobloff, with a little grunt of startled rage, was upon her. She fought and scratched like a cat. The blanket tumbled down and curtained them, the plumed hat fell from the woman's disheveled head, a chair was overturned. But he was too strong and too quick for her. With one lithe arm he pinioned her two hands close down to her sides, crushing the very breath out of her body. With his other he beat off the muffling blanket, and dragged her away from the door. Then he shook her, passionately, and held her off from him, and glared at her.

One year earlier in her career she knew she would have fainted from terror and exhaustion; only her staring eyes, looking past him, by accident caught sight of a little movement which brought her drooping courage into life again.

For she had seen the window-shutter slowly widen, and then a cautious hand appear on the ledge. She watched the shutter swing in, further and further, and then the stealthy figure, with its padded feet, emerge out of the darkness into the half-lighted room. She could even see the pallor of the intruder's face, and his quick movement of warning that reminded her of the part she must play.

"I give up!" she gasped, in simulated surrender, falling prone in Pobloff's arms.

He caught her and held her, bewildered, triumphant.

"You mean it?" he cried, searching her face.

"Yes, I mean it!" she murmured. Then she shuddered a little, involuntarily, for she had seen Durkin catch up one of his shoes, hammer-like, where it protruded from the side pocket of his coat—and she knew only too well how he would make use of it.

As Pobloff bent over her, unwarned, unsuspecting, almost wondering for what she was waiting with such confidently closed eyes, Durkin crossed the carpeted floor. It was then that the woman flung up her arms and encircled the stooping Russian in a fierce and passionate grasp. He laughed a little, deep in his throat. She told herself that she was at least imprisoning his arms.

Durkin's blow caught the bending figure just at the base of the skull, behind the ear. The impact whipped the head back, and sent the relaxing body forward and down. It struck the floor, and lay there, huddled, face down. The woman scrambled to her feet, breathing hard.

"Close the shutters!" said Durkin quickly, as he turned the unconscious man over on his back. Then he caught up a couple of towels and securely tied, first the inert wrists and then the feet. Quickly knotting a third towel, he wedged and drilled a sharp knuckle joint into the flesh of the colorless cheek, between the upper and lower incisors. When the jaw had opened he thrust the knot

into the gaping mouth, securely tying the ends of the towel at the back of the neck.

"Have you everything?" asked Mame, who had once more pinned on the plumed hat, and was already listening at the panel of the hall door. There was no time to be lost in talk.

"Yes, I think so. My baggage will have to be left, but, God knows, there's little enough of it!"

He wiped his forehead and looked down at the bound figure, already showing signs of returning consciousness. They heard laughter, and the sound of footsteps passing down the hall without.

Durkin stood beside his wife, and they listened together behind the closed door.

"Not for a minute—not yet," he whispered. Then he looked at her curiously.

"I wonder if you know just what a close call that was!"

"Yes, I know," she said, with her ear against the panel.

He looked back at the figure, and took a deep breath.

"And this is only an intermission—this is only an eye-opener, to what we will yet get against! Now's our chance. For the love of heaven, let's get out of here. We've got hard work ahead of us, at Genoa—and we've got only till Friday to get there!"

"Now, quick!" she said, as she flung the door open and stepped out into the hall. Luckily, it was empty, from end to end.

Durkin, with assumed nonchalance, walked quietly away. She waited to turn the key in the door, and withdrew it from the lock. Then she followed her husband down the corridor, and a minute or two later rejoined him in the fragrant and balmy midnight air of Monaco.

VI

THE LARK IN THE RUINS

It was not until Mabel Durkin and her husband were installed in an empty

first-class compartment, twining and curling and speeding on their way to Genoa, that even a comparative sense of safety came to them. It was Durkin's suggestion that it might not be amiss for them to give the impression of being a newly-married couple, on their honeymoon journey; and, to this end, he had half-filled the compartment with daffodils and jonquils, with carnations and violets and roses, purchased with one turn of the hand from a midnight flower vender, on his way down from the hills for any early morning traffic that might offer.

So as they sped toward the Italian frontier, in the white and mellow Mediterranean moonlight, threading their way between the tranquil violet sea bejeweled with guardian lights and the steep and silent slopes of the huddled mountains, they lounged back on their hired train-pillows, self-immured, and unperturbed, and blissfully contented with themselves and their surroundings. At least, so it seemed to the eyes of each scrutinizing guard and official, who, after one sharp glance at the flower-filled compartment and the crooning young English lovers, passed on with a laugh and a shrug or two.

Yet, at heart, Durkin and Mame were anything but happy. As they fled along that ancient highway, that traffic and timeworn road between Italy and France where once Greeks and Ligurians, Romans and Saracens, had passed and repassed, they sighed with a sense of relief as each town and village was left behind them.

It was at Ventimiglia that the *capostazione* himself appeared at the door of their compartment, accompanied by a uniformed official. The two fugitives, with their hearts in their mouths, leaned back on their cushions with assumed unconcern, cooing and chattering hand in hand among their flowers, while a volley of quick and angry questions, in Italian, was flung in at them from the opened compartment door. To this they paid not the slightest attention for several moments. Mame turned to her inter-

rogators, smiled at them gently and impersonally, and then shook her head impatiently, with an upthrust of the shoulder which was meant to convey to them that each and every word they uttered was incomprehensible to her.

The *capostazione*, who, by this time, had pushed into their compartment, was heatedly demanding either their passports or their tickets.

Mame, who had buried her face raptly in her armful of jonquils, looked up at him with gentle exasperation.

"We are English," she said blankly. "English! We can't understand!" And she returned to her flowers and her husband once more.

The two uniformed intruders conferred for a moment, while the *conduttore*, on the platform outside, naturally enough expostulated over the delay of the train.

"These fools—these aren't the two!" Mame heard the *capostazione* declare, in Italian, under his breath, as they swung down on the station platform. Then the shrill little thin-noted engine whistle sounded, the wheels began to turn, and they were once more speeding through the white moonlight, deeper and deeper into Italy.

"I wonder," said Mame, after a long silence, "how often we shall be able to do this sort of thing? I wonder how long luck—mere luck, will be with us?"

"Is it luck?" asked her husband. She was still leaning back on his shoulder, with her hand clasping his; accompanying her consciousness of escape came a new lightness of spirit.

"Yes," she answered, as she laughed a little, almost contentedly; "we're like the glass snake. We seem to break off at the point where we're caught, and escape, and go on again as before. I was only wondering how many times a glass snake can leave its tail in its enemy's teeth, and still grow another one!"

And although she laughed again Durkin knew how thinly that covering of facetiousness spread over her actual sobriety of character. It was like a solitary drop of oil on quiet water—

there was not much of it, but what there was must always be on the surface.

In fact, her mood changed even as he looked down at her, troubled by the shadow of utter weariness that rested on her colorless face.

"What would we do, Jim," she asked, after a second long and unbroken silence, "what would we do if this thing ever brought us face to face with MacNutt again?"

"But why should we cross that bridge before we come to it?" was Durkin's answer. She seemed unable, however, to bar back from her mind some disturbing and unwelcome vision of that meeting. She felt, in a way, that she possessed one faculty which the rapid and impetuous nature of her husband could not claim. It was almost a weakness in him, she told herself, the subsidiary indiscretion of a fecund and grimly resourceful mind. Like a river in flood, it had its strange and incongruous back currents, born of its very oneness of too hurrying purpose. It considered too deeply the imminent and not the remoter contingency.

"But can't you see, Jim, that the further we follow this up the closer and closer it's bringing us to MacNutt?"

"Oh, MacNutt is ancient history to us now! We're over and done with him, for all time!"

"You are wrong there, Jim. You misjudge the situation, and you misjudge the man. That is one fact we have to face, one hard fact; MacNutt is not over and done *with us*!"

"But haven't you made a sort of myth of him? Isn't he only a fable to us now? And haven't we got real facts to face?"

"Ah," she said protestingly, "there is just the trouble. You always refuse to look this fact in the face!"

"Well, what are the facts?" he asked conciliatingly, demanding of himself what allowance he must make for that morbid perversion of view which came of a too fatigued body and mind.

"The facts are these," she began, with a solemnity of tone that startled him into keener attentiveness. "You found me in MacNutt's office when he was planning and plotting and preparing for the biggest wire-tapping *coup* in all his career. You were dragged into that plot against your will, almost, just as I had been. But MacNutt gave us our parts, and we worked together there. Then—then you made love to me—don't deny it, Jim, for, after all, it was the happiest part of all my life!—and we both saw how wrong we were, and we both wanted to fight for our freedom. So I followed you when you revolted against MacNutt and his leadership. We fought together, then, tooth and nail, and in the end we captured and carried away almost three thousand dollars. It wasn't the loss of the money that maddened MacNutt; it was the thought that we had beaten him at his own game, that we had stalked him while he was so busy stalking Penfield. Then he trapped us for a moment, and it was sheer good luck that he didn't kill me that afternoon in his dismantled operating-room, before Doogan and his men raided the house. But, as you know, he kept after us, and he cornered you again, and you would have killed him, in turn, if I hadn't saved you from the sin of it, and the disgrace of it. Then we thought we were safe, just because the world was big and wide; because we had made our escape to Europe we thought that we were out of his circuit, that we were beyond his key-call—but here we are being led and dragged back to him, through Keenan. But now, just because there is still an ocean between us, you begin to believe that he has given up every thought of getting even!"

"Well, isn't it about time he did? We've beaten him twice, at his own game, and I see no reason why we shouldn't do it again!"

"But how often can we be the glass snake? I mean, how many times can we afford to leave something behind, and break away, and hope to grow

whole and sound again? And when will MacNutt get us where we can't break away? I tell you, Jim, you don't know this man as I know him! You haven't understood yet what a cruelly designing and artful and vindictive and long-waiting enemy he can be. You haven't seen him break and crush people, as I once did. It's the memory of that makes me so afraid of him!"

"There's just the trouble, Mame," cried Durkin. "The man has terrified and intimidated you, until you think he is the only enemy we have! I don't deny he isn't dangerous, but so is Pobloff, and so is Doogan, for that matter, and this man Keenan as well!"

"But they would never crush and smash you, as MacNutt will, if the chance comes!" she persisted passionately. "You don't see and understand it, because you are so close to it and so deep in it. It's like traveling along this little Riviera railway. It is so crooked and tunneled and close under the mountains that even though we went up and down it for a year, from Nice to Nervi, we could never say that we had seen the Riviera!"

Durkin looked out at the terraced hills, at the undulating fields and the heaped masses of blue mountains under the white Italian moonlight, and did not speak for several seconds.

He had always carried, while with her, the vague but sustained sense of being shielded. Until then her hand had always seemed to guard him, impersonally, as the hand of a busy seeker guards and shelters a candle. Now, for some mysterious reason, he felt her brooding guardianship to be something less passive, to be something more immediate and personal. He knew—and he knew it with a full appreciation of the irony that lurked in the situation—that her very timorousness was now endowing him with a new and reckless courage. So he took her hand, gratefully, before he spoke again.

"Well, whatever happens, we are now in this, not from choice, but

from necessity. If it has dangers, Mame, we must face them. We must grin and bear them. But as I said before, I see no reason why we should cross our bridges before we come to them. And we'll soon have a bridge to cross, and a hard one. I mean Keenan, and everything that will happen in Genoa!"

VII

THE TIGHTENING COIL

HENRY KEENAN, of New York, had leisurely finished his cigar, and had as leisurely glanced through all the three-day-old London papers. He had even puzzled, for another half-hour, over the pages of a *Tribuna*, and after gazing in an idle and listless manner about the empty and uninviting hotel reading-room, he decided that it was time for him to go up to his room. He made his leisurely way to the lift, ascended to the fourth floor, stepped out, and drew his room-key from his pocket, as he walked down the hall, in the same idle and listless manner.

As he turned the corner the listlessness went from his face, and a change came in his languid yet ever-restless and covert eyes. For a young woman was standing before his door, trying to fit a key to the lock. This, he decided as he paused three paces from her and studied her back, she was doing quite openly, with no slightest sense of secrecy. She wore a plumed hat, and a dark cloth tailor-made suit that was unmistakably English. Something about the lines of her stooping figure caused Henry Keenan to remove his hat, respectfully, before speaking to her.

"Could I assist you, madam?" he asked, quite close to her by this time.

She turned with a start, though her loss of self-possession lasted but a moment. But as she turned her startled eyes to him Keenan's last doubt as to whether or not it was a mere mistake withered away from his mind. He knew, from the hot flush that mounted

to her cheeks and from the mellow contralto of her carefully modulated English voice, that she belonged to that vaguely denominated type that would always be called a woman of breeding.

"If you please," she said shortly, stepping back from the door.

He bent over the key which she had left still in the lock.

As he did so he glanced at the number which the key, protruding from the lock, bore stamped on its flat brass bow. The number was Thirty-seven, while the number which stood before his eyes on the door was Forty-one. Under ordinary circumstances the apparent accident would never have given him a second thought. But all that day he had been oppressed by a sense of hidden yet continual espionage. This feeling had followed him from the moment he had landed in Genoa. He had tried to argue it down, inwardly protesting that such must be merely the obsession of all fugitives. And now, even to find an unknown and innocent-appearing young woman trying to force an entrance into his room aroused all his latent cautiousness. Yet a moment later he felt ashamed of his suspicions.

"Why, this is room Forty-one," she cried, over his shoulder. He withdrew the key and looked at it with a show of surprise.

"And your key, I see, is Thirty-seven," he explained.

She was laughing now, a little, through her confusion. She looked a frank and companionable woman, with her love for the merriment of life touched with a sort of autumnal and wistful sobriety. But, above all, she was a beautiful woman, thought the listless and lonely man.

"It was the second turn in the corridor that threw me out," she explained. He found himself walking with her to her door.

She had thought to find some touch of the Boweryite about him, some outcropping of the half-submerged bunco-steerer. Instead of that, both his look and his tone carried some

tinge of quiet yet dominant gentility, reminding her, as she had so often been taught before, that the criminal is not a type in himself, that only fanciful and far-stretched generalizations could detach him as a species, and immure and mark him among his kind.

She glanced at him still again, at the seemingly melancholic and contemplative face, that strangely reminded her of Dürer's portrait of himself. As she did so there was carried to her memory, and imprinted on it, the picture of a wistful and lonely man, his countenance touched, for all its open Irish smile, with some wordless sorrow, lean and gaunt with some undefined hunger, a little furtive and covert with some half-concealed restlessness.

"Aren't you an American?" he was asking, almost hopefully, it seemed to her.

"Oh, no," she answered, with her sober, slow smile. "I'm an English-woman!"

He shook his head, whimsically.

"Then you must know Italy pretty well, I suppose!"

"Oh, yes; I've traveled here, winter after winter!" She picked out a card from her pocket-book, on which was inscribed in Spencerian definiteness of black and white, "Miss Barbara Allen." It had been the card of Lady Boxspur's eminently respectable maid—and Mabel Durkin had saved it for just such a contingency.

He read the name, slowly, and then placed the card in his vest pocket. If he noticed her smile, he gave no sign of it.

"And you like Genoa? I mean, is there anything interesting in this place?" he asked companionably.

"There's the Palazzo Bianco, and the Palazzo Rosso, and, of course, there's the Campo Santo!"

"But who cares for graveyards?"

"All Europe is a graveyard, of its past!" she answered lightly. "That was what I thought you Americans always came to see!"

He laughed a little, in turn, and she both liked him better for it and found it easier to go on.

"I like the Riggi," she added pregnantly.

"The Riggi—what's that, please?"

"That's the restaurant up on the hill." She hesitated and turned back before unlocking her door. "It's charming!"

He was on the point, she knew, of making the plunge and asking if they might not see the Riggi together, when something in her glance, some precautionary chilliness of look, checked him. For she had seen that even now things might advance too hurriedly. It would be wiser, and in the long run it would pay, she warned herself, to draw in—for as she still lingered and chatted with him she more and more felt that she was face to face with a resourceful and strong-willed opponent. She noticed, through all the outward Celtic gentleness, the grim and passionate mouth, the keenness of the shifty yet penetrating hazel-gray eyes, the touch of almost bull-dog tenaciousness about the loose-jointed, high-shouldered figure, and, above all, the audacity of the careless Irish-American smile. That smile, she felt, trailed like a flippant and fluttering tail to the kite of his racial solemnity and stubbornness of purpose, enabling it to rise higher even while it seemed to be weighing it down.

"And you always travel alone?" he finally asked, shaking off the last of his reserve.

"Oh, I'm a bit of a globe-trotter—that's what you'd call me on your side of the ocean, isn't it? You see, I go about Southern Europe picking up things for a London art firm!"

"And where do you go next?"

"Oh, perhaps to Milan, perhaps to Naples; it may even be to Rome, or it might turn out to be Syracuse. With me, everything depends, first on the weather, and, next, on what instructions are sent on."

She inwardly marveled at the glibness and spontaneity with which the words fell from her tongue. She even took a sort of secret joy in the dramatic values which that scene of play-acting presented to her.

"And do you ever go to New York?"

"Yes, such a thing might happen, any time."

It was as well, she told herself, to leave the way well paved.

"*That's* the city for you!" he declared, with a commending shake of the head.

Of the truth of that fact Mabel Durkin was only too well aware; but this was a conviction to which she did not give utterance.

As they stood chatting together in the deserted hallway, a man, turning the corner, brushed by them. He merely gave them one casual glance of inquiry, and then looked away, apparently at the room-numbers on the lintels.

The young woman chanced to be tapping half-carelessly, half-nervously, with her key on the panel of her door. It meant nothing to her comrade, but to the passing man it resolved itself into an intelligible and coherent message. For it was in Morse, and to his trained and adept ear it read: "This—is—Keenan—keep—away!"

VIII

THE INTOXICATION OF WAR

It was three days later that Durkin, watching his chance, made his way to his wife's room unobserved. As he opened the door and stepped noiselessly inside he caught sight of her by the window, her face ruminative and in repose. It looked, for the moment, unhappy and tired and hard. She seemed to stand before him with a mask off, a designing and disillusioned woman, no longer in love with the game of life. Or it was, he imagined, as she would look ten years later, when her age had begun to tell on her, and her still buoyant freshness was gone. He even wondered if in the stress of the game they were now following she would lose the last of her good looks, if even her ever resilient temperament would deaden and harden, and no longer rise supreme to the exacting moment.

But as her startled eyes caught sight of him a welcoming light came into her relaxed face. With her first spoken word her touch of moroseness seemed to slip away from her. If it required an effort to shake herself together, she gave no outward sign of it. She had promised that there should be no complaining and no hesitations from her; and Durkin knew she would adhere to that promise, to the bitter end.

"Well?" he asked anxiously, coming over to where she stood.

"Pobloff has found us!" she said, in her quiet contralto.

"He's here, you mean?"

"He's in Genoa. I caught sight of him in a cab, hurrying from the French Consulate to the Café Jazelli. I slipped into a silversmith's shop, as he raced past, and escaped him."

"And then what?"

"Then several things happened. But first, tell me this: did you get a chance to look over Keenan's room?"

"I was bolted inside twenty minutes after you and he had left the hotel. His trunk was even unlocked, and I looked through everything!"

"Which, of course, was charming work!" she interpolated, with not ungentle scorn.

He shrugged his shoulders deprecatively. "Not quite as charming as dining with your new friend!"

"I almost like him!" admitted Mame frankly, femininely rejoicing at the note of jealousy in the other's voice.

"And no worse than some of the work we've done, or may soon have to do!" Then he went on, with rising passion: "And I'll tell you this, Mame; whatever we do, and whatever we have to go through, we've got to get those securities out of Keenan! We've got to have them, now! We've got to pound at it, and dog him, and fight him, and outwit him, until we either win or go under. It's a big game, and it has big risks, but we're in it too deep, now, to talk about drawing back, or to complain about the dirty work it leads to!"

"I wasn't complaining," she re-

proved, in her dead voice. "I only spoke a bald truth. But you don't tell me what you've found."

"I got nothing—absolutely nothing; not one shred of information even. There's nothing in the room. It stands to reason, then, as I told you from the first, that he is carrying the papers about with him!"

"That will make it harder," she murmured monotonously. "And you're sure your telegram has sent the Scotland Yard men to Como?"

"It must have, or we'd be butting into them. The New Yorker is a Pinkerton man."

He started pacing back and forth in front of her, frowning with mingled irritation and impatience.

"Then what about Pobloff?" he suddenly asked.

"Five minutes after we had stepped out of the hotel he met us, face to face. With Keenan, I had no chance of getting away. So I simply faced it out. Then Pobloff shadowed us to the Riggi, watched us all through luncheon, and followed us down to the city again. And here's the strange part of it all. Keenan saw that we were being shadowed, from the first, and I could see him fretting and chafing under it, for he imagines that it's all because of what he's carrying with him. So, on the other hand, Pobloff has concluded Keenan and I are fellow-conspirators, for he let me go to the lift alone, just to keep his eye on Keenan, who told me he had a little business at the steamship agency."

"But why should we be afraid of Pobloff, then?"

"It's a choice of two evils, I should venture to say. But that's not all. As soon as I was free from each of them, and had left them there, carrying out that silent and ridiculous advance and retreat between them, I had to think both hard and fast. I decided that the best thing for me to do would be to slip down to Rome, at once, and make my visit to the Embassy. I didn't dare look you up, of course. When I saw that I was being followed at the station I bought a ticket for

Busalla, as a blind, and went in one door of my compartment and then out the other. Whether I got away unnoticed or not I can't say for sure. But Pobloff will have resources here that we know nothing of. From now on, you may be sure, he will have Keenan watched by one of his agents night and day!"

"Then, good heavens, we've got to step in and save Keenan from Pobloff!"

"It amounts to that," admitted Mame. "Yet, in some way, if we could only manage it, the two of them ought to fight our battle out for us, between themselves!"

"That's true—but *did* you get to Rome?"

"Yes, without trouble."

"And you got the money?"

"Only half of it. They hedged, and said the other half could not be paid until Pobloff's arrest. Jim, we must be on our guard against that man."

"Pobloff doesn't count!" ejaculated Durkin impatiently. "It's Keenan we have to have our fight with—he's the man with the goods we want!—*that* means only two hundred and fifty pounds!"

"But Pobloff *does* count," persisted Mame. "He's a vindictive and resourceful man, and he's got a score against us to wipe out. Besides all that, he's a master of intrigue, and he has the entire secret service of France behind him, and he knows underground Europe as well as any spy on the Continent. He will keep at us, I tell you, until he thinks he is even!"

"Then let him—if he wants to," scoffed Durkin. "My work is with Keenan. If Pobloff tries interfering with us, the best thing we can do is to get the British Foreign Office after him. *They* ought to be big enough for him!"

"It's not a matter of bigness. *He* won't fight that way. He would never fight in the open. He knows his chances, and the country, and just where to turn, and just how far to go—and where to hide, if he has to!"

"That's true enough, I suppose.

But oh, if I only had him in New York I'd fight him to a finish, and never edge away from him and keep on the run this way!"

"Of course; but, as you say, is it worth while? After all, he's only an accident in the whole affair now, though a disagreeable one. And, what's more, Pobloff will never follow us out of Europe. This is his stamping ground. He had misfortune in America, and he's afraid of it. As I said before, Pobloff and Keenan are the acid and the alkali that ought to make the neutral salts. I mean, instead of trying to save them from one another, we ought to fling them together, in some way. Let Pobloff do the hunting for us—then let us hunt Pobloff!"

"But Keenan is wary, and shrewd, and far-seeing. How is he to be caught, even by a Pobloff?"

"That only time and Pobloff can tell. It will never be brigandage—Keenan will never go far enough afield to give him a chance for that. But I feel it in my bones—I feel that there is danger impending, for us all."

Durkin turned and looked at her, wondering if her woman's intuition was to penetrate deeper into the unknown than his own careful analysis.

"What danger?" he asked.

"Impending dangers cease to be dangers when they can be discerned and defined. It's nothing more than a feeling. But the strangest part of the whole situation is the fact that not one of us, from any corner of the triangle, dares turn to the police for one jot of protection. None of us can run crying to the arms of constituted authority when we get hurt!"

A consciousness of their lonely detachment from their kind, of their isolation, crept through Durkin's mind. He felt momentarily depressed by a sense of friendlessness. It was like reverting to primordial conditions, wherein it was ordained that each life, alone and unassisted, should protect and save itself. He wondered if primitive man, or if even wild animals, did not always walk with that vague con-

sciousness of continual menace, where lupine viciousness seemed eternally at war with vulpine wariness.

"Then what would you suggest?" he asked the woman, who sat before him rapt in thought.

"That we watch Keenan, continuously, night and day. He has been hunted and followed now for over two months, and he is only waiting for a clear field to take to his heels. And when he goes he is going for America. That I know. If we lose sight of him, we lose our chance."

Durkin walked to the window, and looked out at the tiled roofs and the squat chimney-pots, above which he could get a glimpse of bursting sky-rockets and the glow of Greek fire from the narrow canyons of the streets below.

"What are all the fireworks for?" he asked her casually.

"It's a Saint's Day, of some sort, they told me at the office," she explained.

He was about to turn and speak to her again, after a minute's silence, when a low knock sounded on the door. He remained both silent and motionless, and the knock was repeated.

"In a moment!" called the woman, as she motioned Durkin to the door of her clothes-closet. He drew back, with a shake of the head. He revolted momentarily against the ignominy of the movement. But she caught him by the arm and thrust him determinedly in, closing the door on him as she hurriedly let her wealth of chestnut hair tumble about her shoulders. Then she answered the knock, with the loosened strands of chestnut in one abashed hand.

It was Keenan who stood in the hall.

"May I speak to you a moment?" he asked. She seemed able, even under his quiet composure, to detect some note of alarm.

"Will you come in?" she asked, holding the door wide for him.

"If you don't mind the intrusion!"

She had closed the door, and stood facing him, interrogatively.

"What I am going to ask you, Miss

Allen, is something unusual. But this past week has shown me that you are an unusual woman." He hesitated, in doubt as to how to proceed.

"In America," she said, laughing a little, to widen his avenue of approach, "you would call me emancipated, wouldn't you?"

He bowed, and laughed a little in return.

"But let me explain," he went on. "I am in what you might call a dilemma. For some reason or other certain persons here are watching and following me, night and day. In America—which, thank God, is a land of law and order—this sort of thing wouldn't disturb me. But here"—he gave a little shrug—"well, you know what they say about Italy!"

"Then I wasn't mistaken!" she cried, with a well-rung note of alarm.

"Ah, I suspected you'd have an inkling. But what I have here makes the case exceptional—and, perhaps, a little dangerous!"

He drew from his pocket a yellow-tinted manila envelope, of "legal" size. Mame's quick glance told her that it was by no means empty.

"It may sound theatrical, and you may laugh at me, but will you take possession of these papers for me, for a few days? No, let me explain first. They are important, I confess, for, although valueless commercially, they contain personal and private letters that are worth a good deal to me!"

"But this means a great responsibility," demurred Mame.

"Yes; but no danger—at least to you, since you are in no way under suspicion. You said that in five days you would probably be in Naples. Supposing that I arrange to meet you at, say, the Hôtel de Londres there, and then repay you for your trouble."

"But it's so unusual—so almost absurd," still demurred the acting woman. The eavesdropper from the closet felt that it was an instance of diamond cutting diamond. How hard and polished and finished, he thought, actor and actress confronted each other.

"Will you take the risk?" the man was asking.

She looked from him to the packet and then back to him again.

"Yes, if you insist—if it is really helping you out!" she replied, with still simulated bewilderment.

He thanked her, with something more than his professional, placid crispness, and put the packet in her outstretched hand. She was still looking down at it as he withdrew and the door closed behind him.

She listened for a moment, and then turned the key in the lock. Durkin, stepping from his place of concealment, confronted her. They stood gazing at each other, in blank astonishment.

Mame's first impulse was to tear open the envelope, but on second thoughts she flew to her alcohol tealamp and lighted the flame. It was only a minute or two before a jet of steam came from the tiny kettle spout. Over this she shifted and held the gummed envelope flap, until the mucilage softened and dissolved. Then, holding her breath, she peeled back the flap, and from the envelope drew three soiled but carefully folded copies of the *London Daily Chronicle*. The envelope held nothing more.

An oath escaped Durkin, while Mame turned the papers over in her fingers, in speechless amazement. The very audacity of the man swept her off her feet.

It was both a warning and a challenge, grim with its suggestiveness, eloquent with careless defiance. That was her first thought.

"The fool—he's making fun of you!" said Durkin, with a second passionate oath.

Mame was slowly refolding the papers and replacing them in the envelope.

"I don't believe that's it," she said meditatively. "I believe he is trying me—making this a test!"

She carefully moistened the gum and resealed the envelope, so that it bore no trace of having revealed its contents.

"If he comes back I'll know that I am right," she cried, with sudden conviction. "If he finds that I am still here, and that his packet is still intact and safe, he'll do what he wants to do. And that is, he'll trust me with the whole of his securities!"

She quenched the alcohol flame and replaced the lamp in its case.

"If he comes back," mocked Durkin. "Do you know what you and I ought to be doing at this moment? We ought to be following that man every step he takes."

"But where?" she shook her head, slowly, in dissent.

"That's for us to find out. But can't you feel that he's left us in the lurch, that we're shut up here, while he's giving us the laugh and getting away?"

"Jim, listen to me. During this past week I've seen more of Keenan than you have. And I know he is more frightened and worried than he pretends to be. He is, after all, only a tricky and ferrety Irish lawyer, who is afraid of every power outside his own little circuit of experience. He's afraid of Italy. I suppose he has nightmares about *brigantaggio*, even! He's afraid of foreigners—afraid of this sort of conspiracy of silence that seems surrounding him. He's even afraid to take his precious documents and put them in a safe-deposit vault in one of the regularly established institutions here in Genoa. There are plenty of them, but he isn't big and bold enough to do his business that way. And besides, he can never forget that his work is underground and illicit. That is why he carries his documents about with him, on him, in his pockets, like a sneak thief with a pocketful of stolen goods. I don't mean to say that he isn't smooth and crafty, and that he won't fight like a rat when he's cornered! But I do believe that if he and Penfield could get in touch today, here in Genoa, he would hand over every dollar of those securities, and give up the job, and get back to his familiar old lairs among the New York poolrooms where he knows his enemies and his friends!"

Durkin strode toward the door impatiently. He hesitated for a moment, but had already stretched out his hand to turn the key when he drew back, silently, step by step.

For a second time, on the panel without, the low knock was sounding.

Mame watched the closet door draw to and close on Durkin; then she called out, with assumed and cheery unconcern, "Come in."

She did not look up for a moment, for she was still busy with her hair.

The door opened and closed.

"I trust I do not intrude?"

Mame's brush fell from her hand, before she even slowly wheeled and looked, for it was the suave and well-modulated baritone of Pobloff.

"What does this mean?" she demanded vacuously, retreating before his steady and scornful gaze.

"Simply, madam, that you and I seem seldom able to anticipate each other's calls!"

She made a pretense of going to the electric signal.

"It is quite useless," explained the Russian quietly. "The wires are disconnected." He took out his watch and glanced at it. "Indeed, as a demonstration that others enjoy privileges which you sometimes exert, in two minutes every light in this room will be cut off!"

The woman was panting a little by this time, for her thoughts were of Durkin and his danger, as much as of herself. She struggled desperately to regain her self-possession, for there was no mistaking the quiet but grim determination written on the Russian's pallid face. And she knew he was not alone in whatever plot he had laid.

She would have spoken, only the sudden flood of blackness that submerged her startled her into silence. The lights had gone out. While she stood in momentary suspense, a knock sounded still once more on her door.

"Come in," she called out quickly, now alert and alive to every movement.

It was Keenan who stepped in from the half-lighted hall. He would have paused, in involuntary amazement, at

the utter darkness that greeted him, only footsteps approaching and passing compelled him to act quickly.

He stepped inside and closed and locked the door. She had not been mistaken. He *had* come back.

IX

"THE FOLLY OF GRANDEUR"

THERE flashed through Mame's mind, in the momentary silence that fell over that strange company, the consciousness that the triangle was completed; that there, in one room, through a fortuitousness that seemed to her more theatrical than actual, stood the three contending and opposing forces. The thought came and went like a flash, for it was not a time for meditation, but for hurried and desperate action. The sense of something vast and ominous seemed to hang over the darkness, where, for a second or two, the silence of absolute surprise reigned.

The last-comer, too, seemed to feel this sense of something impending, for a moment later his voice rang out, clear and unhesitating, with a touch of challenge in it.

"Miss Allen, are you here? And is anything wrong?"

"Stand where you are!" the voice of the woman answered, through the darkness, firm and clear. "Yes, I am here. But there is another person in this room. He is a man who means some harm, I believe, to both of us!"

"Ah!" said the voice near the door.

The woman was speaking again, her voice high and nervous, from the continued suspense of that darkness and silence combined, a dual mystery from which any bolt might strike.

"Above all things," she warned him, "you must watch that door!"

Her straining ears heard a quiet click-click; she had learned of old the meaning of that pregnant sound. It was the trigger of a revolver being cocked.

"All right—I'm ready," said the man at the door grimly. Then he laughed, perhaps a little uneasily. "But why are we all in darkness this way?"

"The wires have been cut—that is a part of his plan!"

Keenan took a step into the room and addressed the black emptiness before him.

"Will the gentleman speak up and explain?"

No answer came out of the darkness. Mame knew, by this time, that Keenan would make no move to desert her.

"Have you a lamp, or a light of any kind, Miss Allen?" was the next curt and businesslike question.

"Oh, be careful, sir!" she warned him, now in blind and unreasoning terror.

"Have you a light?" repeated Keenan authoritatively.

"I have only an alcohol lamp—it gives scarcely any light—it is for boiling a teapot!"

"Then light it, please!"

"Oh, I dare not!" she cried, for now she was possessed of the unreasoning fear that one step in any direction would bring her in contact with death itself.

"Light it, please!" commanded Keenan. "Nothing will happen. I have in my hand here, where I stand, a thirty-eight calibre revolver, loaded and cocked. If there is one movement from the gentleman you speak of, I will empty it into him!"

Both Keenan and Mame started and peered through the blackness. For a careless and half-derisive, half-contemptuous laugh sounded through the room. Pobloff, obviously, had never moved from where he stood.

Mame groped to the wall of her room and felt with blind and exploring hands until she came to her bureau. Then sounded the clink of nickel as the lamp was withdrawn from its case and the dry rattle of German safety-matches. Then the listeners heard the quick scrape and flash of the match against the side of the little paper box, and the puff of the wavering blue

flame as the match-end came in contact with the alcohol.

Incongruously it flashed through her mind, as wayward thoughts and ideas would at such moments, how relieved primordial man amid his primordial night must have been at the blessed gift of the first fire.

The wavering blue flame widened and heightened. In a moment the inky room was pallidly suffused with its trembling half-light.

The two peering faces turned slowly, until their range of vision had swept the entire room. Then they paused, for motionless against the west wall, between the closet door and the corner, stood Pobloff. His arms were folded, and he was laughing a little.

Mame drew nearer Keenan, instinctively, wondering what the next movement would be.

It was Pobloff's voice that first broke the silence.

"This woman lies," he said, in his suavely scoffing baritone. "This woman——"

"Why don't you say something—why don't you do something!" cried Mame, hysterically turning to Keenan.

"Ring the bell!" commanded Keenan.

"It's useless—the wires are cut," she panted. She could see that, above and beyond all his craftiness, his latent Irish fighting-blood was aroused.

"Then, by God, I'll put him out myself. If there's any fight between him and me"—he turned on Pobloff—"we won't drag a woman into it!"

The tall, gaunt Russian against the wall was no longer laughing.

"Pardon me," he said, advancing a step. "This woman has in her possession a packet of papers—of personal and private papers, with which she has no concern!"

"And what of that?" cried Keenan blindly. Mame saw, to her joy, that he was misled.

"Simply this: that if the lady I speak of hands those papers to me, here, the matter is closed, for all time!"

"And if she doesn't?"

"Then she will do so later!"

A grunt of sheer rage broke from Keenan's lips. But he checked it, suddenly, and wheeled on the woman.

"Give him the package," he ordered. She hesitated, for at the moment the thought of Keenan's trust had passed from her mind.

"Do as I say," he repeated curtly.

Mame drew the yellow manila envelope from her bosom, and with outstretched arm handed it to Pobloff. The Russian took it in silence. Then with a few quick strides he advanced to the alcohol lamp. As he did so both Keenan and Mame noticed for the first time the blunt little gun-metal revolver he held in his right hand.

"Again you will pardon me," said Pobloff, with his ever-scoffing courtliness. "A mere glance will be necessary, to make sure that we are not mistaken!"

He tore open the envelope with one long forefinger, and stooped to draw forth the contents.

It was then that Keenan sprang at him. Mame, at the moment, was marveling at the unbroken continuity of evidence linking her with her uncomprehending opponent. The sudden leap and cry of Keenan sent a tingle of apprehension up and down her body. She asked herself, vaguely, if all the rest of her life was to be made up of this brawling and fighting in unlighted chambers of horror; if, now that she was in the more turgid currents for which she had longed, there were to come no moments of peace amid all her struggling.

Then she drew in her breath with a little gasp, for she saw Pobloff, with a quick writhe of his thin body, free his imprisoned right arm, and strike with the metal butt of his revolver. He struck twice, three times, and the sound of the metal on the unprotected head was sickening to Mame. She staggered to the closet door as the man fell to the floor, stunned.

"Jim! Oh, Jim, quick!—he's killing him!—I tell you he's killing him!"

Durkin said "'Sssh!" under his

breath, and waited. For in the dim half-light they could see that the Russian had ripped open Keenan's coat and vest, and from a double-buttoned pocket from the inside of the inner garment was drawing out a yellow manila envelope, the fellow to that which had already been thrust into his hands. It was then that Durkin advanced.

It seemed brutal to Mame, but she allowed herself time for neither thought nor scruples. All she remembered was that it was necessary—though once again she asked herself if all her life, from that day on, was to be made up of brawling and clubbing.

For Durkin had brought down on the half-turned head the up-poised bedroom chair with all his force. Pobloff, with a little inarticulate cry that was almost a grunt, buckled and pitched forward.

"That settles *you!*" he said heartlessly, as he watched him relax and half roll on his side.

Mame watched him, with no sense of triumph or success, with no emotion but slowly awakening disgust, against which she found it useless to struggle. She watched him with a sense of detachment and aloofness, as if looking down on him from a great height, while he tore open the manila envelope and gave vent to a little cry of satisfaction. They at last possessed the Penfield securities. Then she went over and replenished the waning flame in the alcohol lamp.

"We've got to get away from here now," said Durkin quickly. "And the sooner the better!"

She looked about her, a little helplessly. Then she glanced at Keenan. "See, he's coming to!"

"Are you ready?" Durkin demanded sharply.

"Yes," she answered, in her dead and resigned voice, as she took up her hat and coat. "But where are we going?"

"I'll tell you on the way down. Only get what you want, and hurry."

"But is it safe now?" she demurred, "and for *you?*"

He thought for a moment, with his hand on the doorknob. Then he turned back.

"You'd better keep this, then, until I find what we're against, outside here!"

He passed into her hand the manila envelope, and stepped out into the hall. A moment later she had secreted the packet, along with Pobloff's revolver, which she picked up from the floor. She would fight like a hornet, now, she inwardly vowed, for what she held.

Then she caught her breath, behind the locked door, for the sounds that crept in from the hallway told her that her fear had not been groundless.

She heard Durkin's little choked cry of pain and surprise, for he had been seized, she knew, and pinned back against the door. It was Pobloff's men, she told herself. They had him by the throat, she knew, by the sound of the guttural oaths which they were trying to choke back. She could hear the kick and scrape of feet, the movement of his writhing and twisting body against the door, as on a sounding-board. She surmised that they had his arms held, otherwise he would surely have used his revolver. She was conscious of a sort of wild joy at the thought that he could not, for they were going through him, from the quieted sounds, pocket by pocket, and she knew he would have shot them if he could.

"There's nothing here!" said a voice in French. Mame, listening so close to them, could hear the three men breathe and pant.

"Then the woman's got it!" answered the other voice, likewise in French.

"Shut up! She'll get on!" And Mame could hear them tear and haul at Durkin as they dragged him down the hall—just where, she could not distinguish.

She ran over to Keenan and shook him roughly. He looked at her a little stupidly, but did not seem able to respond to her entreaties.

"Quick!" she whispered, "or it will be too late!"

She flung her pitcher of water in his face and over his head, and poured brandy from her little leather-covered pocket-flask down his throat.

That seemed to revive him, for he sat up on the carpeted floor, mumblingly, and glowered at her. Then he remembered; and as she bathed his bruised head with a wet towel he caught at her hand foolishly.

"Have we lost them?" he asked huskily, childishly.

"No, they are here! See, intact, and safe. But you must take them back. Neither of us can go through that hall with them!"

"Why not?"

"We're watched—we're prisoners here!"

"Then what'll we do?" he asked weakly, for he was not yet himself.

"You must take them, and get out of this room. There is only one way!"

"What is it?"

"You see this rope. It's meant for a fire-escape. You must let yourself down by it. You'll find yourself in a court, filled with empty barrels. That leads into a bake-shop—you can see the oven lights and smell the bread. Give the man ten *lira*, and he's sure to let you pass. Can you do it? Do you understand?"

"Yes," he said, a little vacuously. "But where will I meet you?"

"In Trieste, a week from tomorrow. But can you manage the rope?"

He laughed a little. "I ought to! I've been through a poolroom raid or two, over home!"

"In Trieste then, a week from tomorrow!"

She handed him her brandy-flask.

"You may need it," she explained. He was on his feet by this time, struggling to pull himself together.

"But you can't face that alone," he remonstrated, with a thumb-jerk toward the hall. "I won't see you touched by those damned rats!"

"Ssssh!" she warned him. "They can't do anything to me now, except search me for those papers. I'll wait

until I see you're safely down, then I'll run for the stairs. They've shut off all the lights outside, in this wing, but if they ill-treat me before I get to the main corridor, I'll scream for help!"

"But even to search you—" began Keenan.

"Yes, I know!" she answered evenly. "It's not pleasant. But I'll face it"—she turned her eyes full upon him—"for you!"

They listened for a moment together at the opened window. The red lights were still burning here and there about the city in the streets below, and the carnival-like cries and noises still filled the air.

And she watched him anxiously as he and his packet of documents went down the dangling hemp rope, reached the stone paving of the little court, and disappeared in the square of light framed by the bake-shop window.

Then she turned back into the room, startled by a weak and wavering groan from Pobloff. She went to him, and tried to lift him up on the bed, but he was too heavy for her overtaxed strength. She wondered, as she slipped a pillow under his head, why she should be afraid of him in that comatose and helpless state—why even his white and passive face looked so vindictive and sinister in the dim light of the room:

But as he moved a little she started back, and caught up what things she could fling into her Gladstone bag, and put out the light, and groped her way across the room once more.

Then she flung open the door and stepped out into the hall, with a feeling that her heart was in her mouth, choking her.

She ceased running as she came to the bend in the hall, for she heard the sound of voices, and the light grew stronger. She would have dodged back, but it was too late.

Then she saw that it was Durkin, beside three jabbering and gesticulating Guardie di Pubblica Sicurezza.

"Oh, there you are!" said his equable and tranquil voice, as he removed his hat. "I brought these gentlemen, for someone told me there's a drunkard in

the halls, annoying you, and I was afraid we might miss our train!"

She looked at the *gendarmes* and then on to the excited servants at their heels in bewilderment.

"Explain to these gentlemen just what it was," she heard the warningly suave voice of her husband saying to her, "while I hurry down and order the carriage!"

She was nervous and excited and incoherent, yet as they followed at her side down the broad marble staircase she made them understand dimly that their protection was now unnecessary. It was nothing—only the shock of seeing a drunken quarrel; it had alarmed and upset her. She paused, caught at the balustrade, then wavered a little; and three solicitous arms in dark cloth and metal buttons were thrust out to support her. She thanked them, in her soft contralto, gratefully. The drive through the open air, she assured them, would restore her completely. But all the while she was thinking how needlessly and blindly and foolishly she had surrendered and lost a fortune.

"Won't they find out, and everything be known, before we can get to the station?" she asked, as the fresh night air fanned her throbbing face and brow.

"Of course they will!" said Durkin jubilantly. "But we're not going to the station. We're going to the waterfront, and from there out to our steamer!"

X

AWAKENING VOICES

MABEL DURKIN's memory of that hurried flight from Genoa always remained with her a confusion of incongruous and quickly changing pictures. She had a recollection of stepping from her cab into a crowded sailors' *café chantant* and hurrying out through a side door, of a high wind tearing at her hair and hat as they still hurried down narrow, stone-paved streets, of catching the smell of salt water and the

musky odor of shipping, of a sharp altercation with an obdurate customs officer in blue uniform and tall peaked cap, who stubbornly barred their way with a bare and glittering bayonet against her husband's chest, while she glibly and perseveringly lied to him, first in French, and then in English, and then in Italian. She remembered her sense of escape when he at last reluctantly allowed them to pass, while they stumbled over railway tracks, and the rough stones of the quay pavement, and the bundles of merchandise lying scattered about them. Then she heard the impatient lapping of water, and the outside roar of the waves, and saw the harbor lights twinkling and dancing, and caught sight of the three great white shafts of light that fingered so inquisitively and restlessly along the shipping and the city front and the widening bay, as three great gloomy Italian men-of-war played and swung their electric searchlights across the night.

Then came a brief and passionate scene with a harbor ferryman, who scorned the idea of taking his boat out in such a sea, who eloquently waved his arms and told of accidents and deaths and disasters already befallen the bay that night. She had a memory of Durkin raging up and down the quay with a handful of Italian paper money between his fingers, until the boatman relented. Then came a memory of tossing up and down in a black and windy sea, of creeping under a great shadow stippled with yellow lights, of grating and pounding against a ship's ladder, of an officer in rubber boots running down to her assistance, of more blinding lights, and then of the quiet and grateful privacy of her own cabin, smelling of white-lead paint and disinfectants.

She slept that night, long and heavily, and it was not until the next morning when the sun was high and they were well down the coast, that she learned they were on board the British coasting steamer *Laminian*, of the Gallaway & Papayani Line. They

were to skirt the entire coast of Italy, stopping at Naples and then at Bari, and then make their way up the Adriatic to Trieste. These stops, Durkin had found, would be brief, and the danger would be small, for the *Laminian* was primarily known as a freighter, carrying out blue-stone and salt fish, and on her return cruise picking up miscellaneous cargoes of fruit. So her passenger list, which included, outside of Mame and Durkin, only a consumptive Welsh schoolteacher and a broken-down clergyman from Birmingham, who kept always to his cabin, was likely to no close scrutiny, either from the Neapolitan Guardie Municipali on the one hand, or from any private agents of Keenan and Penfield on the other.

A day of idleness, indeed, seemed to make life over for both Mame and Durkin. Steeping themselves in that comfortable sense of security, they drew natural and easy breath once more. They knew it was but a momentary truce, an interregnum of idleness; but it was all they asked for. They could no longer nurse any illusions as to the trend of their way or the endlessness of their quest. They must now always keep moving. They might alter the manner of their progression, they might change their stroke, but the continuity of effort on their part could no more be broken than could that of a swimmer at sea. They must keep on, or go down.

So, in the meantime, they plucked the day, with a touch of wistfulness, quite distrustful of the morrow. The glimmering sapphire seas were almost motionless, the days and nights were without wind, and the equable, balmy air was like that of an American midsummer, so that all of the day and most of the night they spent on deck, where the Welsh schoolmaster eyed them covertly, as a honeymoon couple engulfed in the selfish contentment of their own great happiness. It reminded Mame of earlier and older days, for, with the dropping away of his professional preoccupations, Durkin seemed to relapse into some more in-

timate and personal relationship with her. It was the first time since their flight from America, she felt, that his affection had borne out the promise of its earlier ardor. And it taught her two things. One was that her woman's natural hunger for love was not so dead as she had imagined. The other was that Durkin, during the last months, had drifted much further away from her than she had dreamed. It stung her into a passionate and remorseful self-promise to keep closer to him, to make herself always essential to him, to turn and bend as he might bend and turn, but always to be with him. It would lead her downward and still further downward, she told herself. But she caught solace from some blind belief that all women, through some vague operation of their affectional powers, could invade the darkest mires of life, if only it were done for love, and carry away no stain. In fact, what would be a blemish in time would almost prove a thing of joy and pride. And in the meantime she was glad enough to be happy, and to be near Durkin.

They caught sight of a corner of Corsica, and on the following night could see the glow of the iron-smelting fires on Elba, and the twinkle of the island shore-lights. From the bridge, too, through one of the officers' glasses, Mame could see, far inland across the Pontine Marshes, the gilded dome of St. Peter's, glimmering in the pellucid morning sunlight.

She called Durkin, and pointed it out to him.

"See, it's Rome!" she cried, with strangely mingled feelings. "It's St. Peter's!"

"I wish it was the Statue of Liberty and New York," he said moodily.

But she was satisfied with the moment, and what it held for her. She would let the future take care of itself; though, as time slipped away and her eye followed the heightening line of the Apennines, she knew that that tranquil Tyrrhenian Sea would not long be left to her.

It was evening when they rounded

the terraced vineyards of Ischia. A low red moon shone above the belching pinnacle of Vesuvius. Mame and Durkin leaned over the rail together, as they drifted slowly up the bay, with its twilight sounds of shipping, its rattle of anchor chains, its far-off cries and echoes, and its watery, pungent Southern odors.

They watched the ship's officer put ashore to obtain *pratique*, and the yellow flag come down, and heard the signal-bells of the engine-room, as he returned, with a great cigar in one corner of his bearded mouth. There was nothing amiss. There was neither Carabinieri nor Guardie di Pubblica Sicurezza to come on board with papers and cross-questions. Before the break of day their discharged cargo would be in the lighters and they would be steaming southward for the Straits of Messina.

Nor was the peacefulness of their cruise in any way interrupted at Bari. When once clear of that port even Durkin's moodiness left him, for he had figured out that they would be able to connect with one of the Cunard liners at Trieste, and if only they escaped attention and detection in that harbor, it would be two days at the most before they would be turning homeward. But all the while Mame said nothing of the Penfield papers.

It was only as they steamed into the harbor of Trieste, in the teeth of a *bora* and a high-running sea, that Mame allowed herself any fleeting moment of self-pity. She wondered if she were already weary of idleness, if, as with her husband, the febrile passion for activity in any form was possessing her again. For as she gazed up at the bald and sterile hills behind that clean and wind-swept Austrian city she remembered that they had been thus denuded that their timbers might make a foundation for Venice. She felt, in that passing mood, that her own life had been denuded, that all its softening and shrouding beauties had been cut out and carried away, that from now on she was to be torn by winds and scorched by open suns—

while the best of her slept submerged, beyond the reach of her unhappy hands.

But Durkin, at her side, through the driving spray and rain, pointed out to her the huge rolling bulk and the red funnels of the Cunarder.

"Thank heaven!" he cried, with a wave of relief, "we will be in time to catch her!"

The *Laminian* dropped anchor to the windward of the liner, and as dusk settled down over the harbor Mame took a wordless pleasure in studying the shadowy hulk which was to carry her back to America, to her old life and her old associations. But she was wondering how she should tell him of the loss of the Penfield securities.

Suddenly she ran to the companion-way and called down to her husband.

"Look!" she said, under her breath, as he came to the rail, "they're talking with their wireless!"

She pointed to the masthead of the Cunarder, where, through the twilight, she could "spell" the spark, signal by signal and letter by letter, as the current broke from the head of the installation wires to the hollow metal mast, from which ran the taut-strung wires connecting, in turn, with the operating office just aft and above the engine-rooms.

"Listen," she said, for in the lull of the wind they could hear the short, crisp spit of the spark as it spelt out its mysterious messages.

Durkin caught her arm, and listened, intently, watching the little appearing and disappearing blue spark, spelling off the words with narrowing eyes.

"They're talking with the station up on the mainland. Do you hear what it is? Can't you make it out?"

It was, of course, the Continental, and not the Morse, code, and it was not quite the same as stooping over and listening to the crisp, incisive pulsations of a "sounder." But Mame heard and saw and pieced together enough of the message to clutch, in turn, at Durkin's arm, and wait with quickened breath for the answering spark-play.

"No—such—persons—on—board—send—fuller—description."

There was a silence of a minute or two, and then the mysterious Hertzian voice lisped out once more.

"Description—not—forwarded—by—Embassy—man—and—wife—are wanted—for robbery—at—Monte—Carlo—also—at—Genoa—name—Durgin—or—Durkin."

The listening man and woman looked at each other, and still waited.

"Oh, this *is* luck!" said the listener gratefully, as he drew a deep breath. "This *is* luck!"

"Listen, they're answering again!" cried Mame.

"Why—not—confer—with—Trieste—authorities—will—you—please—telephone—our—agents—to—send—out—tender—to—take—off—Admiral—Stuart."

Then came the silence again.

"Yes," sounded the minute electric tongue from the mountain-top, so many miles away. "Good—night!"

"Good—night!" replied the articulate mass of heaving steel, swinging at her anchor chains.

XI

WIRELESS MESSAGES

"WHAT are we to do?" asked Mame, turning from the masthead to her husband's studious face.

"We've got to jump at our chance, and get on board the *Slavonia* over there!"

"In the face of those messages?"

"It's the messages that simplify things for us. All we now have to do is to get on board in such a manner that the ship's officers will have no suspicions, and not dream of linking us with the runaway couple being looked for. That means that we must not, in the first place, appear together, and, in the second, of course, that we must travel and appear as utter strangers!"

"But supposing Keenan himself is on board that steamer?" parried Mame.

"It is obvious that he isn't, for then it would be quite unnecessary to send out any such messages by wireless. From now forward, remember, you are Miss Allen, at your old trade of picking up little art relics for wealthy families in England and America. You will have yourself rowed directly over to the *Slavonia's* landing ladder—you can see it there, not two hundred feet away—and go on board and secure a stateroom from the purser. The clearing papers can be attended to later. I'll have the *Laminian* dingey take me ashore, somewhere down near Barcola, if it can possibly be done in this wind. Then I'll come out to the *Slavonia* later, having, you see, just arrived on the train from Venice!"

She shook her head doubtfully. An inapposite and irrational dread of seeing him return to the dangers of land took possession of her. She knew it would be impossible for her to put this untimely feeling into words so that he would see and understand it; and, such being the case, she argued with him stubbornly to alter his plan, and to allow her to be the one to go ashore, while he went immediately to the liner.

He consented to this at last, a little reluctantly, but the thought that he was safely installed in his cabin, as she made her way shoreward through the dusk, in the pitching and dipping little dingey, consoled her for the sense of loneliness and desertion which her position brought to her. The wind had increased, by this time, and the rain was coming down in slanting and stinging sheets. But her spirit did not fail her.

From the water-front, deserted and rain-swept, she called a passing street carriage, and drove to the Hotel Bristol. There she sent the driver to ask if any luggage had arrived from Venice for Miss Allen. None had arrived, and Miss Allen, naturally, appeared in great perturbation before the sympathetic but helpless hotel manager. She next inquired if it was possible to ascertain when the Cunard steamer sailed.

"The *Slavonia*, madam, leaves the harbor at daybreak!"

"At daybreak! Then I must go on board tonight, at once!"

"I fear it is impossible, madam. The *bora* is blowing, as you see, and the harbor is empty!"

"But I *must* get on board!" she cried, and this time her dismay and despair were not mere dissimulation.

The landlord shrugged his shoulders, while Mame, calling out a peremptory order, in Italian, to her driver, left him at the curb looking after her through the driving rain in bewilderment.

She went first to the steamship offices. They were closed. Then she sought out the Cunard tender—it was lightless and deserted. Then she hurried to the water-front, driving up and down along that lonely stretch of deserted quays, back and forth, coaxing, wheedling, trying to bribe indifferent and placid-eyed boatmen to row her out to her steamer. It was useless. It could not be done. It was not worth while to risk either their boats or their lives, even in the face of the fifty, one hundred, two hundred *lira* which she flaunted in their unperturbed faces.

Grating and rocking against the quayside, above the heads of the group about her, she caught sight of a white-painted steam launch, with a high-standing bow, and on it a uniformed officer, smoking in the rain.

She approached him without hesitation. Could he, in any way, carry her out to her steamer? She pointed to where the lights of the *Slavonia* shone and glimmered through the gray darkness. They looked indescribably warm and homelike to her peering eyes.

The officer looked her up and down in stolid Austrian amazement, trying to catch a glimpse of her face through her wet and flattened traveling veil. Could he take her out to her steamer? No; he was afraid not. Yes, it was true he had steam up, and that his crew were aboard, but this was the official patrol of the captain of the port—it was not to carry passengers—it was solely for the imperial service of the Austrian Government.

She pleaded with him, weeping. He was sorry, but the captain of the port would permit no such irregularity.

"Where is the captain of the port, then?" she demanded passionately.

The officer puffed his cigar slowly, and looked her up and down once more. He was in his office in the Administration Building—but the officer's shrug and smile told her that it was, in his eyes, no easy thing to secure admission to the captain of the port. The very phrase, "the captain of the port," that had been bandied back and forth for the last few minutes, became odious to her; it seemed to designate the title of some august and supernatural and tyrannous power who held her life and death in his hands.

She turned on her heel and drove at once to the Administration Building. Here, at the entrance, she was confronted by a uniformed sentry, who, after questioning her, passed her on to still another uniformed personage, who called an orderly, and sent that somewhat bewildered messenger and his charge to the anteroom of the captain of the port's private secretary. Mame had a sense of hurrying down long and jail-like corridors, of ascending stairs and passing sentries, of questionings and consultations, of at last being ushered into a softly-lighted, softly-carpeted room, where a white-bearded, benignant-browed official sat in a swivel-chair before a high walnut desk.

He shook his head mournfully as he listened to her story. Yet something almost fatherly about his sad and wistful face steeled her to persistence, and she afterward remembered, always a little shamefaced, that she had wept and clung to his arm and wept still again, before she melted and bent him from his official determination. She saw, through blurred and misty eyes, his hand go out and touch an electric button at his side. She saw him write three lines on a sheet of paper, an attendant appear, and heard an order briefly and succinctly given. She had gained her end.

The captain of the port rose as she turned to go from the room.

"Good night, and also good-bye, *signorina!*" he said quietly, with his stately old-world bow.

She paused at the door, wordlessly demeaned and ashamed of herself. She felt, in some way, how miserable and low and self-seeking she stood beneath him, how high and firm he stood above her, with his calm and disinterested kindness.

She turned back to him once more.

"Good-bye," she said inadequately, in her tearful and tremulous contralto. "Good-bye, and thank you, again and again!"

Then she hurried down to her waiting carriage and raced for the quay. There she took an almost malicious delight in the bustle and perturbation to which her return gave sudden rise. The sleepy and sullen crew were stirred out, signals were clanged, ropes were cast off; and down in her little narrow cabin, securely shut off from the driving spray, she could feel and hear the boat lurch and pound through the waves. Then came shrill calls of the whistle above, the sound of gruff voices, the rasp and scrape of heaving woodwork against woodwork, the grind of the ladder against the boat-fenders, the cry of the officer telling her to hurry.

She walked up the *Slavonia's* ladder steadily, demurely, for under the lights of the promenade deck she could see the clustering, inquisitive heads, where a dozen crowding passengers tried to ascertain just who could be coming aboard with such ceremony.

Leaning over the rail, with a cigar in his mouth, she caught sight of her husband. As she passed him, at the head of the ladder, he spoke one short sentence to her, under his breath.

It was a commonplace enough little sentence, but as the purport of it filtered through her tired mind it stung her into both a new wariness of attitude and thought and a new gratefulness of heart.

For as she passed him, without one betraying emotion or one glance aside, he had whispered to her, under his breath:

"Keenan is here, on board. Be careful!"

XII

BROKEN INSULATION

THE *Slavonia* was well down the Adriatic before Keenan was seen on deck. Both Mame and Durkin, by that time, had met in secret more than once, and had talked over their predicament and decided on a plan of action.

"Whatever you do," Durkin warned her, "don't let Keenan suspect who I am! Don't let him get a glimpse of you with me. My part now has got to be what you'd called 'armed neutrality.' If anything unforeseen turns up—and that can only be at Palermo or Gibraltar—I'll be hanging round to come to your help in some way—but, whatever you do, don't let Keenan suspect this!"

"What if an officer should introduce you to me?" She laughed a little, with a careless shrug of the shoulders. It was not the first time, during the last few weeks, that her husband had beheld the signs of some callousing and hardening process going on within her.

"Oh, in that case," he answered, "you'll find me very glum and uncongenial. You'll probably be only too glad to leave me alone!"

She nodded her head in meditative assent. Her problem was a difficult one.

"Jim," she said suddenly, "why should we play this waiting and re-treating game during the next two weeks? Here we have Keenan on board, with nothing to interfere with our operations. Why can't we work a little harder to win his confidence?"

"We?" asked the other.

"Well, why couldn't I? All along, during those days in Genoa, I had the feeling that he would have believed in me, if some little outside accident had only confirmed his faith in me. We can't tell, of course, just what he found out after that Pobloff affair, or just how he interpreted it, or whether he is as much in the dark as ever. If

that is the case, we may stand just where we were before with Keenan!"

"Then go ahead and captivate him!" said Durkin, with a voice that was gruff only because it was indifferent.

"But see, Jim—I'm getting so old and ugly!" And again she laughed, with her own show of indifference, though her husband knew, by the wistfulness of her face, that she was struggling to hold back some deeper and stronger current of feeling. So he thrust his hands deep in his pockets, and refused to meet her eyes for a second time.

"I don't see why we should be afraid of either Palermo or Gibraltar," Durkin went on at last, with a half-impatient business-is-business glance about him. "Keenan is alone in this. He has no agents over here, that we know of, and he daren't put anything in the hands of the authorities. He's a runaway, a fugitive with the district-attorney's office after him, and he has to move just as quietly as we do. Mark my words, where he will make his first move, and do anything he's going to do, will be in New York!"

"Then why can't I prepare the ground for the New York situation, whatever it may be?" she demanded.

"You mean by standing pat with Keenan?"

"Precisely."

"Then how will you begin?"

"By sending him a note at once, telling him how I slipped away from Genoa to Venice, and asking him the meaning of the Poblloff attack—in other words, by appearing so actively suspicious of him that he'll forget to be suspicious of me."

"And what do you imagine he will answer?"

"I think he will send me back word to say absolutely nothing about the Genoa episode—he may even claim that it's quite beyond his comprehension. That will give us a chance to meet more naturally, and then we can talk things over more minutely, at our leisure."

Durkin wheeled on her, half-angrily.

"While you're making love to him

on the bridge-deck, on moonlight nights!"

"Do you think I could?" she murmured, with a ghost of a sigh.

Durkin emitted a little impatient oath.

"Don't swear, Jim!" she reproved him.

The vague prescience that some day he should lose her, that in some time yet to be she should pass beyond his reach and control, filtered through his consciousness, like a dark and corroding seepage. He caught her by the arm roughly, and looked into her face, for one silent and scrutinizing minute.

"Do you care?" she asked, and it seemed to him there was a tremor of happiness in her tone.

"I *hate* this part of the business!" he cried, with still another oath.

"Oh, do you care?" she reiterated, as her arms crept about him valiantly, yet a little timidly.

He surrendered, against his will, to the gentle artillery of her tears. They startled and unmanned him a little, they came so unexpectedly, for as he crushed her in his sudden responding embrace the impulse, at that time and in that place, seemed the incongruous outcropping of some deeply submerged stratum of feeling.

"If you *do* care, Jim, why do you never tell me so?" she demanded of him, in gentle reproof. He then noticed, for the first time, the hungry and unsatisfied look that brooded over her face. He confessed to himself unhappily that something about him was altered.

"This cursed business knocks that sort of thing out of you," he expiated, discomforted at the thought that a feeling so long disregarded could grip him so keenly. And all the while he was torn by the misery of two contending impressions; one, the dim, subliminal foreboding that she was ordained for worthier and cleaner hands than his, the other, that this upheaval of the emotions still had the power to shake and bewilder and leave him so wordlessly unhappy. It was

the ever-recurring incongruity, the repeated syncretism, which made him vaguely afraid of himself and of the future. Then, as he looked down into her face once more, and studied the shadowy violet eyes, and the low brow, and the short-lipped mobile mouth so laden with impulse, and the soft line of the chin and throat so eloquent of weakness and yielding, a second and stronger wave of feeling surged through him.

"I love you, Mame; I tell you I love you!" he cried, with a voice that did not seem his own. And as she lay back in his arms, weak and surrendering, with the heavy lashes closed over the shadowy eyes, he stooped and kissed her on her red, melancholy mouth.

Yet as he did so the act seemed to take on the touch of something solemn and valedictory.

XIII

THE TANGLED SKEIN

It was the *Slavonia's* last night at sea. In another twelve hours the pilot would be aboard, Quarantine would be passed, the engines would be slowed down, and the great steamer would be lying at her berth in the North River, discharging her little world of life into the scattered corners of a waiting continent. Already, on the green baize bulletin-board in the companionway the purser had posted the customary notice to the effect that the steamer's operator was now in connection with New York City, and that wireless messages might be received for all points in Europe and America.

There was a chill in the air, and to Mabel Durkin, sitting beside Keenan on the promenade deck, there seemed something restless and phantasmal and ghostlike in the thin, North Atlantic sunlight, after the mellow and opulent gold of the Mediterranean calms. It seemed to her to be a presage of the restless movement and tumult which she felt to be before her.

She had not been altogether amiss in her predictions of what the past fortnight would bring forth. She had erred a little, she felt, in her estimate of Keenan's character; yet she had not been mistaken in the course of action which he was to pursue.

For, from the beginning, after the constraint of their first meeting on board had passed away, he had shown her a direct and open friendliness which now and then even gave rise to a vague and uneasy suspicion in her own mind. This friendliness had brought with it an easier exchange of confidences, then a seeming intimacy and good-fellowship which, at times, caused Mame to lose herself in her rôle. Keenan, one starlit night under the shadow of a lifeboat amidships, had even acknowledged to her the dubiousness of the mission that had taken him abroad. Later, he had outlined to her what his life had been, telling her of his struggles when a student of the law school, of his early and unsavory criminal-court efforts, of his unhappy plunge into the morasses of Eighth-ward politics, of his campaign against the "Dave Kelly" gang, and the death of his political career which came with that opposition, of his swinging round to the tides of the times and taking up with bucket-shop work, of his "shark" lawyer practices and his police-court legal trickeries, of his gradual identification with the poolroom interests and his first gleaning of gambling-house lore, of his drifting deeper and deeper into this life of unearned increment, of his fight with the Bar Association, which was taken and lost before the Judiciary Committee of Congress, and of his final offer of retainer from Penfield, and private and expert services after the second raid on that big gambler's Saratoga house. Mame could understand why he said little of the purpose that took him to Europe. Although she waited anxiously for any word that he might let fall on that subject, she respected his natural reticence in the matter.

Yet, in all his talk, he was open and

frank enough in his confession of attitude. He had seen too much of criminal life to have many illusions or to make many mistakes about it. He openly admitted that the end of all careers of crime was disaster—if not open and objective, at least hidden and subjective. He had no love for it all. But when once, through accident or necessity, in the game, he protested, there was but one line of procedure, and that was to bring to illicit activity that continuous intelligence which marked the conduct of those who stood ready to combat it. Society, he declared, owed its safety to the fact that the criminal class, as a rule, was made up of its least intelligent members. When criminality went allied with a shrewd mind and a sound judgment—and a smile curled about Keenan's melancholy Celtic mouth as he spoke—it became transplanted, practically, to the sphere and calling of high finance. But if the defier of order preferred the simpler order of things, his one hope lay in the power of making use of his fellow-criminals, by applying to the unorganized smaller fry of his profession some particular far-seeing policy and some deliberate purpose, and through doing so standing remote and immune, as all centres of generalship should stand. This, he went on to explain, was precisely what Penfield had done, with his art palaces and his European jaunts and his prolonged defiance of all the police powers of a great and active city. He had organized and executed with Napoleonic comprehensiveness; he had fattened on the daily tribute of less imaginative subordinates in sin. And now he was fortified behind his own gold. He was being harassed and hounded for the moment—but the emotional wave of reform that was calling for his downfall would break and pass, and leave him as secure as ever.

"Now, my belief is," Keenan told the listening woman, "that if you find you cannot possibly be the Napoleon of the campaign, it is well worth while to be the Ney. I mean that it has

paid me to attach myself to a man who is bigger than I am, instead of going through all the dangers and meannesses and hardships of a petty independent operator. It pays me in two ways. I get the money, and I get the security."

"Then you believe this man Penfield will never be punished?"

He thought over the question for a moment or two.

"No, I don't think he ever will. He stands for something that is as active and enduring in our American life as are the powers arrayed against him. You see, the district-attorney's office represents the centripetal force of society. Penfield stands for the centrifugal force. They fight and battle against one another, and first one seems to gain, and then the other, and all the while the fight between the two, the struggle between the legal and the illegal, makes up the balance of everyday life. I mean that every Broadway must have its Bowery, that the world can only be so good—if you try to make it better, it breaks out in a new place—and the master criminal is a man who takes advantage of this nervous leakage. We call him the occasional offender—and he's the most dangerous man in all society. In other words, the passion, say, for gambling, is implanted in all of us; the thought of some vast hazard, of some lucky stroke of fate, is in your head as often as it is in mine. You tell me you are a hard-working art collector, making a decent living by gadding about Europe picking up knick-knacks. Now, suppose I came to you with a proposal like this: Suppose I told you that without any greater personal discomfort, without any greater danger or any harder work, you might, say, join forces with me and at one play of the game haul in fifty thousand dollars from men who no more deserve this money than we do, I'll warrant that you'd think over it pretty seriously."

The woman at his side laughed a little, and then gave a significantly careless shrug of her small shoulders.

"Who wouldn't?" she said, and their eyes met questioningly in the uncertain light.

"Women, as a rule, are timid," he said at last. "They usually prefer the slower and safer road."

"Sometimes they get tired of it. Then, too, it isn't always safe just because it's slow!"

It seemed to give him the opening for which he had been waiting. He looked at her with undisguised yet calculating admiration.

"I'll wager *you* would never be afraid of a thing, if you once got into it, or wanted to get into it!" he cried.

She laughed again, a self-confident and reassuring little laugh.

"I've been through too many things," she admitted simply, "to talk about being thin-skinned!"

"I knew as much. I could see it, from the first. You've got courage, and you're shrewd, and you know the world—and you've got what's worth all the rest put together. I mean that you're a fine-looking woman, and you've never let the fact spoil you!"

There was no mistaking the pregnancy of the glance and question which she next directed toward him.

"Then why couldn't you take me in with you?" she asked, with a quiet-toned solemnity.

She had the sensations of a skater on treacherously thin ice as she watched the slow, cautious scrutiny of his unbetraying face. But now, for some reason, she knew neither fear nor hesitation.

"And what if we did?" he parried temporizingly.

"Well, what if we did?—men and women have worked together before this!"

Even in the dim light that surrounded them she could notice the color go out of his intent and puzzled face. From that moment, in some mysterious way, she lost the last shred of sympathy for his abject and isolated figure.

"And do you understand what it would imply—what it would mean?"

he asked slowly and with significant emphasis.

She could not repress her primal woman's instinct of revolt from the thoughts which his quiet interrogation sent at her, like an arrow. But she struggled to keep down the little shudder which woke and stirred within her. Until then she had advanced discreetly and guardedly, and as she had advanced and taken her new position he had as guardedly fallen back and held his own. It had been a strange and silent campaign, and all along it had filled Mame with a sense of stalking and counter-stalking. Now they were plunging into the naked and primordial conflict of man against woman, without reservations and without indirections—and it left her with a vague fear of some impending helplessness and isolation. She had a sudden prompting to delay or evade that final step, to temporize and wait for some yet undefined reinforcements.

"And you realize what it means?" he repeated.

"Yes," she said in her soft contralto. A feeling of revulsion that was almost nausea was consuming her. This, then, she told herself, was the bitter and humiliating price she must pay for her tainted triumph.

"And you would accept and agree to the conditions—the only conditions?" he demanded, in a voice now hatefully tremulous with some rising and controlling emotion. She had the feeling, as she listened, that she was a naked slave girl, being jested over and bidden for on the auction block of some barbaric king. She felt that it was time to end the mockery; she no longer even pitied him.

"Listen!" she suddenly cried, "they are beginning to send the wireless!"

They listened side by side, to the brisk kick and spurt and crackle of the fluid spark leaping between the two brass knobs in the little operating-room just above where they sat. They could hear it distinctly, above the drone of the wind and the throb of the engines and the quiet evening noises of the orderly ship—spitting and clutter-

ing out into space. To the impatient man it was nothing more than the ripple of unintelligent and unrelated sounds. To the wide-eyed and listening woman it was a decorous and coherent march of dots and dashes, carrying with it thought and meaning and system. And as each word fluttered off on its restless Hertzian wings, like a flock of hurrying carrier-pigeons through the night, the woman listened and translated and read, word by word.

"Then we go it together—you and I—for all it's worth!" Keenan was saying, with his face near hers and his hand on her motionless arm.

"Listen," she said sharply. "It—it sounds like a bag of lightning getting loose, doesn't it?"

For the message which was leaping from the lonely and dipping ship to the receiving wires at the Highland Heights Station was one that she intended to read, word by word. It was a simple enough message, but as it translated itself into intelligible coherence it sent a creeping thrill of conflicting fear and triumph through her. For the words which sped across space from key to installation-pole read:

"Woman—named—Allen—will—bring—papers—to—P—Field's—downtown—house—I—will—wait—word—from—you—at—Philadelphia—advise—me—of—situation—there—and—wire—D—in—time—Ker-rigan."

It was only then that she was conscious of the theatricalities from which she had emerged, of the man so close beside her, still waiting for her play-acting word of decision. It was only then, too, that she fully understood the adroitness, the smooth and supple alertness, of her ever-wary and watching companion. But she rose to the situation without a visible sign of flinching. Taking one deep breath, as though it were a final and comprehensive gulp of unmenaced life, she turned to him, and gazed quietly and steadily into his questioning eyes.

"Yes, if you say it, I'm with you now, whether it's for good or bad!"

"And this is final!" he demanded. "If you begin, you'll stick to it!"

"To the bitter end!" she answered grimly. And there was something so unemotionally decisive in her tone that he no longer hesitated, no longer doubted her.

XIV

THE SEVERED KNOT

It was in the gray of the early morning, as the *Slavonia* steamed from the Upper Bay into the North River and the serrated skyline of Manhattan bit into the thin rind of sunrise to the east, that Durkin and Mame came suddenly together in a deserted companionway.

"I want to see you!" he said sharply.

She looked about to make sure they were unobserved.

"I know it—but I daren't run the risk—now!"

"Why not now? What has changed?" he demanded.

"I tell you we can't, Jim! We might be seen here, any minute!"

"What difference should that make?"

"It makes every difference!"

"By heaven, I've got to see you!" For the first time she realized the force of the dull rage that burned within him. "I want to know what's before us, and how we're going to act!"

"I tell you, Jim, I can't talk to you here! I tried to see you quietly, last night, but you had gone to your cabin. I have a feeling that we're under the eye of almost every steward on this ship—I *know* we are being watched, all the time. And if you were seen here with me, it would only drag you in, and make it harder to straighten out, in the end. Can't you see what's going on?"

"Yes, by God, I have been seeing what's going on—and I'm getting sick of it!"

"Oh, not *that*, Jim!" she cried, in a little muffled wail. "You know it would never be that!"

His one dominating feeling was that which grew out of the stinging consciousness that she wanted to escape him, to get rid of him.

"Won't you be reasonable? I've got to see this through now, and one little false move would spoil everything! I must land by myself. I'll write you, at the Bartholdi, when and where to meet me!"

The noise of approaching footsteps sounded down the carpeted passageway. He had caught her gruffly by the arm, but now he released his grip and turned away.

"Quick," she whispered, "here's somebody coming!"

She was struggling with the ends of her veil, and Durkin was aimlessly pacing away from her, when the hurrying steward brushed by them. A moment later he returned, followed by a second steward, but by this time Durkin had made his way to the upper deck, and was looking with quiescent rage at the quays and walls and skyscrapers of New York.

Before the steamer wore into the wharf Mame had seen Keenan and a last few words had passed between them. She sternly schooled herself to calmness, for she felt her great moment had come.

At his request that her first mission be to deliver a sealed packet at the office of Richard Penfield, in the lower West Side, she evinced neither surprise nor displeasure. It was all in the day's work, she protested, as Keenan talked on, giving her more definite instructions and still again impressing on her the need for secrecy. She took the sealed package without emotion—the little package for which she had worked so hard and lost so much and waited so long—and as apathetically secreted it. Equally without emotion she passed Durkin, standing at the foot of the gangway. Something in his face, however, warned her of the grim mood that burned within him.

"Don't follow me!" she muttered, between her teeth, as she swept unbetravellingly by him, and hurriedly made her way past the customs bar-

rier and out to the closed carriage Keenan's steward had already ordered for her. She heard the nervous trample of hoofs on the wooden flooring, the battle of truck-wheels, the muffled sound of calling voices, and she leaned back in the gloomy cab and closed her eyes with a great sense of escape, with a sense of relief tinged with triumph.

As she did so the door of her turning cab was opened, and the sudden square of light was blocked by a massive form. She gave a startled little cry as the figure swung itself up into the seat beside her. Then the curtained door swung shut, with a slam. It seemed like the snap of a steel trap.

"Hello, there, Mame!—I've been looking out for you!" said the intruder, with a taunt of mockery in his easy laugh.

It was MacNutt. She gaped at him stupidly, with an inarticulate throaty gasp, half of protest, half of bewilderment.

"You see, I know you, Mame, and Keenan doesn't!" And again she felt the sting of his scoffing laughter.

She looked at the subdolous, pale-green eyes, with their predatory restlessness, at the square-blocked, flaccid jaw, and the beefy, animal-like massiveness of the strong neck, at the huge form odorous of gin and cigar smoke, and the great, hairy hands marked with their purplish veinings. And her heart sank and hope burned out of her.

"You! How dare *you* come here?" she demanded, with a show of hot defiance.

He looked at her collectedly and studiously, with an approving little side-shake of the bull-dog, pugnacious-looking head.

"You're the same fine looker!" was all he said, with an appreciative clucking of the throat. By this time they had threaded their way out of the tangled traffic of West street, and were rumbling cityward through the narrower streets of Greenwich village. Mame's first intelligible feeling was one of gratitude at the thought that Dur-

kin had escaped the trap into which she herself had fallen. Her second feeling was one of fear that he might be following her, then one that he might not, that he would not be near her in the coming moment of need—for she knew that now of all times MacNutt held her in the hollow of his hand—that now, as never before, he would frustrate and crush and obliterate her. There were old transgressions to be paid for; there were old scores to be wiped out. Keenan and his Penfield wealth were nothing to her now—she was no longer plotting for the future, but shrinking away from her dark and toppling present, that seemed about to buckle like a falling wall and crush her as it fell. Month after month, in Europe, she had known visions of some such meeting as this, through nightmare and troubled sleep. And now it was upon her.

MacNutt seemed to follow her line of flashing thought, for he emitted a short bark of a laugh and said: "It's pretty small, this world, isn't it? I guessed that we'd be meetin' again before I'd swung round the circle!"

"Where are we going?" she demanded, trying to lash her disordered and straggling thoughts into coherence.

"We're goin' to the neatest and completest poolroom in all Manhattan. I mean, my dear, that we're drivin' to Penfield's brand-new downtown house, where, as somewhat of a hiker in the past, you'll see things done in a mighty whole-souled and princely fashion!"

"But why should I go there? And why with you?"

"Oh, I'm on Penfield's list, just at present, kind o' helpin' to soothe some of the city police out o' their reform tantrums. And you've got about a quarter of a million of Penfield's securities on you—so I thought I'd kind o' keep an eye on you—this time!"

Her first impulse was to throw herself headlong from the cab door. But this, she warned herself, would be both useless and dangerous. Through the curtained window she could see that they were now in the more populous

districts of the city, and that the speed at which they were careering down the empty car-tracks was causing hurrying, early morning foot-passengers to stop and turn and gaze after them in wonder. It was now, or never, she told herself, with a sudden deeper breath of determination.

With a quick motion of her hand she flung open the door, and leaning out, called shrilly for the driver to stop. He went on unheeding, as though he had not heard her cry.

She felt MacNutt's fierce pull at her leaning shoulder, but she struggled away from him, and repeated her cry. A street boy or two ran after the carriage, adding to the din. She was tearing and fighting in MacNutt's futile grasp by this time, calling desperately as she fought him back. As the cab swerved about an obstructing delivery-wagon a patrolman sprang at the horses' heads, was jerked from his feet, was carried along with the careering horse, but in the end brought them to a stop. Before he could reach the cab door a crowd had collected.

A hansom dashed up as the now infuriated officer brushed and elbowed the crowd aside. Above the surging heads, in that hansom, Mame could see the familiar figure, as it leaped to the ground and dove through the closing gap of humanity, after the officer.

It was Durkin; and now, in a sudden passion of blind fear for him she leaped from the cab-step and tried to beat him back with her naked hands, foolishly, uselessly, for she knew that if once together MacNutt and he would fall on one another and fight it out to the end.

The patrolman caught her back, roughly, and held her.

"What's all this, anyway?" It surprised him a little, as he held her, to find that the woman was not inebriate.

"I want this woman!" cried Durkin, and at the sound of his voice MacNutt leaned forward from the shadows of the half-closed carriage, and the eyes of the two men met, in one pregnant and contending stare.

A flash of inspiration came to the trembling woman.

"I will give it to him, officer, if he'll only not make a scene!" She was fumbling at a package in the bosom of her dress.

"He can have his stuff, every bit of it—if he'll let it go at that!"

Durkin caught his cue as he saw the color of one corner of the sealed yellow manila envelope.

"Stand back there!" howled the officer to the crowding circle. "And you, shut up!" he added to MacNutt, now horrible to look upon with suppressed rage.

"This woman lifted a package of mine, officer," said Durkin quickly. "If it's intact, why, let her go!"

His fingers closed, talon-like, on the manila envelope. He flashed the unbroken red seal at the officer, with a little laugh of triumph. That laugh seemed to madden MacNutt, as he made a second ineffectual effort to break into that tense and rapid cross-fire of talk.

"And you don't want to lay a charge?" the policeman demanded, as he angrily elbowed back the ever intruding circle.

"Let 'em go!" said Durkin, backing toward his cab.

"But what's the papers, and what t'ell does *she* want with 'em?" interrogated the officer.

"Correspondence!" said Durkin easily. "Kind of personal stuff. They're—*he's* drunk, anyway!" For stumbling angrily out of the cab, MacNutt was crying that it was all a pack of lies, that they were a quarter of a million in money and that the officer should arrest Durkin on the spot, or he'd have him "broke."

"And then you'll chew me up an' spit me out, won't you, you blue-gilled Irish bull-dog?" jeered the irate officer, already out of temper with the unruly crowd jostling about him.

"By God, I'll take it out of *you* for this when my turn comes!" raved MacNutt, turning, purplish gray of face, on the deprecating Durkin. "I'll take it out of you, by God!"

"There—there! He's simply drunk, officer; and the woman has squared herself. I don't want to press any charge—but you'd better take his name!"

"Drunk, am I? You'll be drunk when I finish with you. You won't have a name, you'll have a number, when I'm through with you!" repeated the infuriated MacNutt.

"Look here, the two o' you!" suddenly exclaimed the outraged arm of the law, "you climb into that hack and clear out o' here, as quick as you can, or I'll run you both in!"

MacNutt still expostulated, still begged for a private audience in the street-corner saloon, still threatened and pleaded and protested.

The exasperated officer turned to the cab-driver, as he slung the street loafers from him to right and left.

"Here, you get these fares o' yours out o' this—get them away mighty quick, or I'll have you soaked for breakin' the speed ord'nance!"

Then he turned quickly, for the frightened woman had emitted a sharp scream, as her bull-necked companion, with the vigor of a new and desperate resolution, bodily caught her up and thrust her into the gloom of the half-curtained carriage.

"Oh, Jim, Jim, don't let him take me!" she cried mysteriously to the man she had just robbed. But the man she had just robbed looked at her with what seemed indifferent and even vindictive eyes, and said nothing.

"Don't you know where he's taking me? Can't you see? It's to Penfield's!" she cried, through her weakening struggles.

"He can take you to hell now, for all I care!" retorted the motionless and indifferent man to whom she had appealed, as the cab door slammed shut and the horses went plunging and curvetting through the crowd.

"You'd better get away as quiet as you can!" said the policeman, in an undertone, for Durkin had slipped a ten-dollar bill into his unprotesting fingers. "You'd better slide, for if

the colonel happens along I can't do much to help you out!"

Then, with his hand on Durkin's cab door he said, with unfeigned bewilderment: "Say, what t'ell was the game of your actress friend, anyway?"

XV

THE ULTIMATE OUTCAST

JEALOUSY, in Durkin's fiery and active brain, soon burned itself out. And it left, as so often had happened with him, manifold gray ash-heaps of regret for past misdeeds. It also brought with it the customary revulsion of feeling and passion for some amendatory activity.

It was not until after two hours of fierce and troubled thought, however, that Durkin left the Bartholdi, and taking a hansom, drove directly to the Criminal Courts building in Centre street.

Once there, he made his way to the office of the district-attorney. As he thoughtfully waited for admission into that democratized court of last appeal there passed through his mind the dangers and the chances that lay before him. The situation had its menaces, both obvious and unforeseen, but the more he thought over it the more he realized that the emergency called for action, at once decisive and immediate. He had already bungled and hesitated and misjudged. Blind feeling had warped his judgment. Until then he had blocked out his path of action only crudely; there had been little time for the weighing of consequences and the anticipation of contingencies. He had acted quickly and blindly. He had both succeeded and been defeated.

It was not until then, too, that the actual peril hanging over his wife came home to him. In the dust and tumult of battle, and in the black depths of the jealous vapors that had so blinded and sickened him, he had for the moment forgotten just what she meant to him, just how handicapped and helpless he

stood without her. If the thought of their separation touched him, because of more emotional reasons, it was already too early in his mood of reaction to admit it to his own shamefaced inner self. Yet he felt, now, that through it all she was true gold. It was only when the tie stood most strained and tortured that the sense of its true strength came home to him.

As these thoughts and feelings swept disjointedly through his busy head word was sent out to him that he might see the district-attorney.

The office he stepped into was curtain-draped and carpeted, and hung with framed portraits, and strewn with heavy and comfortable-looking leather arm-chairs. Durkin had expected it to look like an iron-grilled precinct police-station, and he was a little startled by the sense of luxury and well-being pervading the place.

Tilted momentarily back in a leather chair, behind a high-backed hardwood desk, the visitor caught a glimpse of one of those nervously alert, youngish-old figures which always seem so typically American.

He paused in his task of checking a list of typewritten names, and motioned Durkin to a seat. The visitor could see that he was with an official who would countenance no profligate waste of time. So he plunged straight into the heart of his subject.

"This office is at present carrying on a campaign against Richard Penfield, the poolroom operator and gambler."

The district-attorney put down his paper.

"This office is carrying on a campaign against every lawbreaker brought to its attention," he corrected succinctly. Then he caught up another typewritten sheet. "How much have you lost?" he asked over his shoulder.

"I'm not a gambler," retorted Durkin as crisply, "and I've lost nothing!"

The district-attorney turned over the card which had been brought in to him, with a deprecating uplift of the eyebrows.

"Most of the people who come here to talk about Penfield and his friends

come to tell me how much they've lost." He leaned back, and sent a little cloud of cigarette smoke ceilingward. "And, of course, it's part of this office's duty to keep a fool and his money together—as long as possible. What is it I can do for you?"

"I want your help to get a woman out of Penfield's new downtown house. She is—well, she is a very near friend of mine, and she's being held a prisoner there?"

"By the police?"

"No, by one of Penfield's men."

"Is she a respectable woman?"

Durkin felt that his look was answer enough.

"Is she a frequenter of poolrooms?"

Durkin hesitated, this time, and weighed his answer.

"I don't think so."

"She's not a frequenter?"

"No!"

"Some rather nice women are, you know, at times!"

"She may have been, once, I suppose, but I know not recently."

"Ah! I see! And what do you want us to do?"

"I want your help to get her out of there, today, before any harm comes to her."

"What sort of harm?"

Durkin found it hard to put his fears and feelings into satisfactory words. He was on dangerous seas, but he made his way doggedly on, between the Charybdis of reticence and the Scylla of plain-spoken suggestion.

"I see—in other words, you want the police to raid Penfield's downtown gambling establishment before two o'clock this afternoon, and release from that establishment a young lady who drove there, and probably not for the first time, in an open cab in the open daylight, because certain ties which you do not care to explain bind you to the young lady in question?"

The brief and brusque finality of tone in the other man warned Durkin that he had made no headway, and he caught up the other's half-mocking and tacit challenge.

"For which, I think, this office will

be adequately repaid, by being brought into touch with information which will help out its previous action against Penfield!"

"Who will give us this?"

Durkin looked at his cross-examiner, nettled and impatient.

"I could!"

"In other words, you stand ready to bribe us into a doubtful and hazardous movement against the strongest gambler in all New York, on the expectation of an adequate bribe! This office, sir, accepts no bribes!"

"I would not call it bribery. I would call it coöperation."

"It all amounts to the same thing, I presume. Now, let me tell you something. Even though you came to me today with a drayful of crooked faro layouts and doctored-up roulette wheels from Penfield's house, it would be practically impossible, at this peculiar juncture of municipal administration, to take in my men and carry out a raid over Captain Kuttrell's head!"

"Ah, I see! You regard Penfield as immune!"

"Penfield is *not* immune!" said the public prosecutor angrily. "Don't misunderstand me. As a recognized and respected citizen, you always have the right to call on the officers of the law, to secure protection and punishment of crime. But this must be sought through the natural and legitimate channels."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean go to the police."

"But to lay a charge with the police would be impracticable, in this case. It wouldn't get at Penfield, and it would only lead to—to embarrassing publicity."

"Exactly so! And you may be sure, young man, that Penfield is quite aware of that fact. To be candid, it is just such things as this that allow him to be operating today. If you start the wheels, you must stand the racket!"

"Then you allow a notorious gambler to break every law of the land and say you can give me no help whatever

in balking what amounts to a criminal abduction?"

The swivel-chair creaked peremptorily, as the public prosecutor turned sharply back to his desk.

"You'd better try the police!" he bit out impatiently.

Durkin strode to the door. He was halfway through it, when he was called sharply back.

"Don't carry away the impression, young man, that we're not fighting this man Penfield as hard as we can. We have been after him and his kind, and we're still after them. But we don't pretend to accomplish miracles. This city is made up of mere human beings, and human beings still have the failing of breaking out, morally, now in one place, now in another. We can compress and segregate those infectious blots, but until you can show us the open sore we can't put on the salve. If you are convinced you are the object of some criminal activity, and are willing to hold nothing back, I can detail two plain-clothes men from my own office to go with you and help you out."

Durkin laughed, a little recklessly, a little scoffingly. Two plain-clothes men to capture a steel-bound fortress!

"Don't trouble them. They might make Penfield mad—they might get themselves talked about—and there's no use, you know, making a mess of one's mayoralty chances!"

And he was through the door indignantly, and as indignantly out, before the district-attorney could so much as flick the ash off his cigarette-end.

But after doing so, he touched an electric button, and it was at once answered by an athletic-looking clerk with all the earmarks of the collegian about him.

"Tell Barney to follow that man, and keep him under his eye, closely, and report to me tonight! Now open the windows, and let that United Garment Workers' Delegation in!"

Durkin, in the meantime, hurried uptown in his hansom, consumed with

a feeling of resentment, torn by a fury of blind revolt against all organized society, against all law and authority and order. Still once more it seemed that some dark coalition of forces silently confronted and combated him at every turn. The consciousness that he must now fight, not only alone, but in the face of this unjust coalition, brought with it a desperate and almost intoxicating sense of audacity. If the law itself was against him, he would take fate into his own hands, and go to his own ends, in his own way. If the machinery of justice ground so loosely and so blindly, there was no reason why he himself, however recklessly he went his way, should not in the end disregard its engines and evade its ever-impending cogs.

He would show them! He would teach them that red-tape and officialism could only blunder blindly on at the heels of his elusive and lightfooted wariness. If they were bound to hold him down and delegitimatize him and keep him a pariah and a revolter against order, he would show them what he, alone, could do in his own behalf.

And as he drove hurriedly through the crowded city streets, still lashing himself into a fury of resentment against organized society, he formulated his plan of action, and mentally took up, point by point, each new move and what it might mean. As he pictured, in his mind, each anticipated phase of the struggle he felt come over him, for the second time, a sort of blind and irrational fury, the fury of a rat in a corner, fighting for its life.

XVI

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

"AND here's where we two hang out!" It was MacNutt who spoke.

Mabel Durkin was neither protesting nor struggling when he drew up in front of what she knew to be Penfield's lower gambling club. It stood in that half-squalidly residential and

half-heartedly commercial district, lying south of Washington Square, a little to the west of Broadway's great artery of traffic. A decorous and unbetraying door, bearing only the modest sign, "The Neptune Club," and a narrow stairway leading to an equally decorous and uncompromising hall, gave no hint, to the uninitiated, of what the building might hold.

But on one side of the narrow door she could make out an incongruously ornate and showy cigar-store; on the other, an equally unlooked-for woman's hair-dressing and manicuring parlor. In the one you might sedately purchase a perfecto, and take your peaceful departure never dreaming of how closely you had skirted the walls of the busiest poolroom south of all Twenty-third street. In the other you might have your hair quietly shampooed and Marcelled and dressed, and return to your waiting automobile, utterly oblivious of the fact that within thirty feet of you fortunes were being recklessly staked and lost and won and again swept away.

It was through the hair-dressing parlor that MacNutt led the dazed and unprotesting Mame, pinning her to his side by the great arm that was, seemingly, so carelessly linked through hers. He gave a curt nod to the capped and aproned attendant, who touched a button on her desk, without so much as a word of challenge or inquiry.

"I'm boss here for a while, and I'm goin' to clean out the building, so that you can have this little picnic all to your lonely!" remarked MacNutt, as he pushed her on.

A door to the rear of the second parlor swung open, and as she was led through it she noticed that it was sheathed with heavy steel plating. Still another door, which opened as promptly to MacNutt's signal, was armored with steel, and it was not until this door had closed behind them that her guardian released the cruel grip on her arm. Then he chuckled a little, gutturally, deep in his pendent and flaccid throat.

"We're up to date, you see, doin' business in a regular armor-clad office!"

Mame looked about her, with widening eyes. MacNutt laughed again, at the sense of surprise which he read on her face.

It was obviously a poolroom, but it was unlike anything she had ever before seen. It was heavily carpeted and richly furnished. The walls were windowless, the light being shed down from twelve heavily ornamented electroliers, each containing a cluster of thirty lamps. These walls, which were upholstered with green burlap, bordered at the bottom with a rich frieze of lacquered and embossed *papier-mâché*, were divided into panels, and dotted here and there with little canvases and etchings. On the east end of the room hung one especially large canvas, crowned with a green-shaded row of electric lamps. MacNutt, with a chuckle of pride, touched a button near the door, and the huge canvas and Bouguereau-looking group of bathing women painted upon it disappeared from view, disclosing to Mame's startled eyes a bulletin blackboard, such as is used in almost every poolroom, for the chalking up of entries and the announcement of jockeys and weights and odds.

MacNutt pressed a second button, and the twelve electric fans of burnished brass hummed and sang and droned, and filled the room with a stir of air.

"A little different, my dear, from the way they did business when you and me were pikers up in the West Forties, eh?"

Mame remained silent, as the bathing women, with a methodic click of the mechanism, once more dropped down through the slit in the picture frame, and hid the red-lined bulletin board from view.

"Gamblers, like us, always were weak on art," giped MacNutt. "There's Dick Penfield, spendin' a hundred thousand a year on pictures an' vases an' rugs, and Sam Brucklin makin' his Saratoga joint more like a second Salon than a first-class bucket-shop, and Larry Wintefield, who knows

more about a genuine Daghestan than you or me knows about a Morse sounder, and Al MacAdam, who can't buy chinaware fast enough! As for me, I must say I have a weakness for a first-class nood! And I guess a heap o' these painters would be quittin' the profession if it wasn't for folks of our callin'!"

Mame's roving but unresponding eyes were taking in the huge mahogany table, in the centre of the room, the empty, high-backed chairs clustered around it, the countless small round tables, covered with green cloth, which flanked the walls, and the familiar Penfield symbol, of three interlaced crescents, which she saw stamped or embossed on everything.

He went to one of the five cherry-wood desks which were strewn about the room, and still again touched a button.

"Katie," he said to the capped and aproned attendant who answered the call from the hair-dressing parlors, "bring me and the lady something to drink!"

Mame would have refused it, but she sorely felt the need of stimulation. MacNutt poured her a second generous glass of the fiery liquid, but this she declined. Having finished his own, he took up hers, and poured it down his throat with a grateful smack of the purplish lips.

"Now, I'm goin' to show you round a bit, just to make it plain to you, before business begins for the day. I want you to see that you're not shut up in any quarter-inch cedar band-box!"

He took her familiarly by the arm and led her to a door which, like the others, was covered with a plating of steel, and heavily locked and barred.

"Necessity, you see, is still the mother of invention," he said, as his finger played on the electric signal and released the obstructing door. "If we're goin' to do poolroom work, nowadays, we've got to do it big and comprehensive, same as Morgan or Rockefeller would do their line o' business. You've got to lay out the stage, nowa-

days, to carry on the show, or something'll swallow you up. Why, when we worked our last wire-tapping scheme with a hobo from St. Louis, who was rotten with money, we escorted him, on two hours' notice, into as neat a lookin' Postal-Union branch office as you'd care to see, with half a dozen fake keys a-goin' and twenty actors and supers helpin' to carry off the act. *That's* the up-to-date way o' doin' it! *That's* how a man like Penfield makes this kind o' graftin' respectable and aboveboard and just about as honest as bein' down in the Cotton Exchange!"

He was leading her down a narrow hallway, four feet wide, with unbroken walls on either side of them. At the end of this still another armored door led into a medium-sized room, as bald and uninviting as a dentist's waiting-room. Here he led her to two horizontal slits in the wall and told her to look down.

She did so, and found herself peering below, out into the well-stocked cigar-store, with a clear view of the entrance

"That's the conning-tower of this here little floating fortress," chuckled MacNutt, at her shoulder. "This place you're in is steel-lined, and it would take three hours o' chisel and sledge work for anybody, from Eggers up to MacAdoo himself, to get inside, even though he did find us out, and even though he did escape the sulphuric bottles between the bricks. Each one o' these little slits is in line with a nice gilded cigar sign in the shop. So no one down there, you see, knows who's eyin' them. *We* don't need any lookout, hangin' round the street-front and tippin' us off. Our man down below sizes up everyone who comes into that shop. If he's all right, the white light flashes, and he gets through. If he's not, the cigar clerk rings another button just under his counter, and we know what to do. If it's a case o' raid, our lookout flashes the red light through each o' the four rooms, with one push of the button, and then our second man throws back the switch and puts out

every light in the buildin'. Then with another button push, the locks of every door can be thrown shut, and they're four inches thick, most of them, and of good oak and steel. If the electricity should give out, here, you see, are the hand bolts, which can be run out at any time. Then we've got a little mercerized steel office, which you won't see, where our cashier and our sheetwriters work!"

Mame said nothing, but her still roving eyes took in each detail, bit by bit, as she warned and schooled herself to note and remember each door and room and passage.

"And now, in case you may be lookin' for it without my help, I'm goin' to take you down and show you the way out. We go through this little passage, and then we take up this steel trapdoor. It's heavy, you see! Then we go down this nice little grill-work iron ladder—don't pull back, I've got you!—and then we open this next very fine steel door—so; and here we are in what you'd call the safety-deposit vaults. It's a mighty handsome-lookin' safe, all laid in Portland cement, as you can see, but we're not goin' to tarry lookin' into that just now. You see, if we want to get out, we go through this hall, and follow this little passageway, one end openin' up right under the sidewalk, in the refractin' glass manhole. Leading to the back, here, is a second passage, all barred, the same as the others. So, if our front is shut off, and they're hot after us, we shut everything after us as we go, and then open this neat little steel trapdoor, and find ourselves smellin' fresh air and five lines full of washin' from that Dago tenement just above us!"

"And why are you showing me all this?" demanded Mame.

He looked at her, out of his pale-green, furtive eyes, and locked the door with a vindictive snap of the bolts.

"I'll tell you why, my gay young welcher, for we may as well understand one another, from the start. Now that Penfield's shut up his New-

port place and is coolin' his heels up in Montreal for a few months, I'm runnin' this nickel-plated ranch myself. And I've got a few old scores to wipe out—some old scores between that enterprisin' dood husband o' yours an' myself!"

"What has he ever done to you? Why should you want to punish *him*?" argued Mame helplessly.

"I'm not goin' to punish him!" declared MacNutt, with a wicked laugh. "That's just where the damned fine poetic justice of the thing comes in. *He's goin' to punish himself!*"

She looked at him studiously, beligerently.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that Durkin's got his quarter of a million in securities, all right, all right, but, by God, I've got *you*! And I mean that he's goin' to, that he's got to, make a choice between them and you. So we'll just wait and find out which he loves best, his beau or his dough!" And he laughed harshly at the feeble witticism, as he added, in his guttural undertone: "And I guess we get the worth of our money, whichever way it goes!"

Mame's impression was that he was half drunk, that he was mumbling vaguely of revenges which grew up and died in their utterance. Her look of open scorn stung him into a sudden tremor of anger.

"Oh, don't think I'm spoutin' wind! If Durkin's the man you think he is, and I hope he is, *he'll be tryin' to nose his way into this place before midnight tonight!*"

"And he will," cried Mame exultantly, "and with the whole precinct police force behind him!"

"He daren't!" retorted MacNutt. "He daren't get within a hundred yards of the Central Office, and he daren't show his nose inside a precinct station-house! And that's not all, either. There's no captain on this side of New York who's goin' to buck against the whole Tammany machine an' poke into this Penfield business. If that young man with the butterfly necktie over on Centre street thinks

he can keep us movin', he's got to do a heap less talkin' and a heap more convictin' before he can put *our* lights out! Oh, no, Jimmie Durkin knows how the land lays. He's one o' your bold and brainy kind, who likes to shut himself up in a garret for a week, and make maps of what he's goin' to do, an' how he's goin' to do it, and then trip off by his lonely and do his huntin' in the dark! And he's goin' to try to get in here, before midnight tonight, and what's more, *he's goin' to find it uncommonly easy to do!*"

"You mean you'll entice him and trap him here?"

"No, I won't lay a finger on him. You'll do the enticin', and he'll do the trappin'! I won't even be round to see—till afterward!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean we're holdin' open house tonight," mocked MacNutt, "and that Durkin will maybe drop in!"

"And then what will it be?"

"Come this way, my beauty, and I'll show you. First thing, though, just notice this fact. We're not goin' to make it too hard and discouragin' for Durkin. This trapdoor will be left unlocked. Also, that front man-hole will be left kind of temptingly open, with a few chunks o' loose coal lyin' round it, so that even a Mercer street roundsman couldn't help fallin' into it! Oh, yes; he'll find it easy enough!"

Mame followed him without a word, as he made his way through the low and narrow steel-lined tunnel leading to the vault-room.

"Now, my dear, I guess this is the only way he'll be able to get at you, unless he comes in a flyin' machine, and the first place he'll nose through will be this room. So, bein' old at the business, he's sure to try a crack at our safe. At least, he'll go gropin' around for a while. Not an invitin'-lookin' piece o' furniture, I grant you, but that's neither here nor there. It's not the safe that'll be detainin' Durkin, or any other house-breaker who tries to get gay on these premises. If you look hard, maybe

you'll be able to see what's a damned sight more interestin'!"

Mame looked, but she saw nothing beyond the great vault and the burnished copper guard-rail that surrounded it, like the fender about a marine engine.

"You don't notice anything strikin'?" he interrogated wickedly.

She did not.

He emitted a guttural little growl of a laugh, and stepped over to a half-hidden switchboard, high up on the wall. He threw the lever out and down, and the kiss of the meeting metals sounded in a short and malevolent spit of blue light.

Mame's slowly comprehending eyes were riveted on the burnished copper railing, on which, only a moment before, her careless fingers had rested. There was no sign, no alteration in the shining surface of that polished metal, but she knew that a change, terrible and malignant, had taken place. It was no longer a mild and innocent guard-rail. It was now an instrument of destruction, an unbuoyed channel of death. She stood staring at it, with fixed and horrified eyes, until it wavered before her, a glimmering and meandering rivulet of refracted light.

The wave of pallor that swept over her face seemed to change her eyes from violet to black, although, for a moment, their gaze remained as veiled and abstracted as a sleep-walker's. Then a movement from her companion stung and restored her to lucidity of thought. For, from where it leaned against the wall, MacNutt had caught up a heavy door-sheathing of pressed steel. It was painted a Burgundy red, to match the upholstery of the upper room where it had once done service, and on the upper panel was embossed the Penfield triple crescent.

This great sheet of painted steel MacNutt held above his head, as a hesitating waiter might hold a gigantic tray. Then he stepped toward the shimmering guard-rail, and stood in front of it.

"Now, this luxurious-lookin' rear-admiral's rail-fence is at present con-

nected with a tapped power circuit, or a light circuit, I don't know which. All I know is that it's carryin' about a twenty-eight-hundred arc-light current. And just to show that it's good and ready to eat up anything that tries monkeyin' round it, watch this!"

He raised the Burgundy-red door-sheathing vertically above his head, and stepping quickly back, let it descend, so that as it fell it would strike the metal of the sunken vault-top and the copper guard-ail as well.

The very sound of that blow, as it descended, was swallowed up in the sudden, blinding, lightning-like flash, in the hiss and roar of the pale-blue flame, as the sheet of steel bridged and writhed and twisted, warping and collapsing like a leaf of writing-paper on the coals of an open fire. A sickening smell of burning paint, mingling with the subtler gaseous odors of the corroding metal, filled the little dungeon.

"Don't! That's enough!" gasped Mame, groping back toward the support of the wall.

MacNutt shut off the current, and kicked the charred door-sheathing, already fading from incandescence into ashen ruin, with his foot. The smell of burning leather filled the room, and he laughed a little, turning on the woman a face crowned with a look of Belial-like triumph, with dark and sunken circles about the vindictive, deep-set eyes.

Once, in an evening paper, she had pored over the picture of an electrocution at Sing Sing, a haunting and horrible scene, with the dangling wires reaching down to the prisoner, strapped and bound in his chair, the applied sponges at the base of the spine, the buckled thongs about the helpless ankles, the grim and waiting gaol officials, the boyish-looking reporters, with watches in their hands, the bald and ugly chamber, and in the background the dim figure of Retributive Justice, with uplifted arm, where an implacable finger was about to touch

the fatal button. Time and time again that vision had brought terror to her midnight dreams, and had left her weak and panting, catching at her startled husband with feverish and passionate hands and holding him and drawing him close to her, as though that momentary guardianship could protect him from some far and vaguely impending danger.

"Oh, Mack," she burst out hysterically, overwrought by the scene before her, "for the love of God, don't make him die this way! Give him a fighting chance! Give him a show! Do what you like with me, but don't blot him out, like a dog, without a word of warning!"

"It's not my doin'!" broke in her tormentor.

"It's inhuman—it's hellish!" she went on. "I can't stand the thought of it!"

MacNutt laughed his mirthless laugh once more.

"Oh, yes; you'll stand it, and you'll see it, too! You'll be right here, where you can take the whole show in, this time! It won't be a case o' foolin' the old man, like it was last time!"

"I will be here?" she gasped.

"You'll be right on the spot—and you'll see the whole performance!"

She drew her hands down, shudderingly, over her averted face, as though to shut something even from her imagination.

"And do you know what'll be the end of it all?" MacNutt went on, in his frenzied mockery. "It'll all end in a little paragraph or two in the *Morning Journal*, to the effect that an unknown safe-cracksman accidentally came in contact with a live wire, and was shocked to death in the very act of breaking into a pious and unoffendin' cigar-store vault! And you'll be the only one who'll know anything different, and I guess you won't do much squealin' about it!"

"I will! I will, although I wither between gaol walls for it—although I die for it! I'm no weak and foolish woman! I've known life bald to the

bone; I've fought and schemed and plotted and twisted all my days almost, and I can die doing it! And if you kill this man, if you murder him—for it *is* murder!—if you bring this dog's death on him, I will make you pay for it, in one way or another—I'll make you mourn it, David MacNutt, as you've made me mourn the first day I ever saw your face!"

She was in a blind and unreasoning passion of vituperative malevolence by this time, her face drawn and withered with fear, her eyes luminous, in the dungeon-like half-lights, with he inner fire of her hate.

"Keep cool, my dear, keep cool!" mocked MacNutt, without a trace of trepidation at all her vague threats. "Durkin's not dead yet!"

She caught madly at the slender thread of hope which swung from his mockery.

"No! No, he's *not* dead yet, and he'll die hard! He's no fool—you've found that out in the past! He will give you a fight before he goes, in some way, for he's fought you and beaten you from the first—and he'll beat you again—I know he'll beat you again!"

Her voice broke and merged into a paroxysm of sobbing, and MacNutt looked at her bent and shaken figure with meditative coldness.

"He may have beaten me, once, long ago—but he'll never do it again. He won't even go out fightin'! He'll go with his head hangin' and his nose down, like a sneak! And you'll see him go, for you'll be tied there, with a gag in your pretty, red mouth, and you'll neither move nor speak. And there'll be no light, unless he gets so reckless as to strike a match. But when the light does come, my dear, it'll be a flash o' blue flame, with a smell o' something burnin'!"

The woman covered her face with her hands, and swayed back and forth where she stood.

Then MacNutt held back his guttural laugh, suddenly, for she had fallen forward on her face, in a dead faint.

XVII

THE ENTERING WEDGE

It was at least four o'clock in the afternoon—as the janitor of the building later reported to the police—when a Postal-Union lineman, carrying a well-worn case of tools, made his way up through the halls and stairways of one of those many Italian apartment houses just south of Washington Square and west of Broadway. He worked on the roof, apparently, for some twenty minutes. Then he came down again, chatted for a while with the janitor in the basement, and giving him a cigar, borrowed an eight-foot step-ladder, for the purpose of scaling some twelve feet of brick wall, where the adjoining office building towered its additional story above the apartment-house roof.

If the janitor had been less averse to mounting his five flights of stairway, or less indifferent as to the nature of the work which took the busy telegraph official up to his roof, he might, that afternoon, have witnessed both a delicate and an interesting electrical operation.

For once up on the second roof, and sure that he was under no immediate observation, the lineman in question carefully unpacked his bag of tools. His first efforts were directed toward the steel transom which covered the trapdoor opening out on the roof. This, he discovered with a grunt of disappointment, resisted even his short, curved steel lever, pointed at one end like a gigantic tack-drawer. Restoring this lever to the bottom of his leather tool-bag, he made his way to the southeast corner of the building, where a tangle of insulated wires, issuing from the roof beneath his feet, merged into one compact cable, which, in turn, entered and was protected by a heavy lead pipe, leading, obviously, to the street below, and thence to the cable galleries of Broadway itself.

It took him but a minute or two to cut away a section of this protecting pipe, and expose to view the many

wires making up an astonishingly substantial cable for so meager an office building. He then turned back to his tool-case and lifted therefrom, first a Bunnell sounder, and then a Wheatstone bridge, of the post-office pattern, a coil of KK wire, a pair of lineman's pliers, and a handful or two of other tools. Still remaining in the bottom of his bag might have been found two small rubber bags filled with nitroglycerine, a cake of yellow soap, a brace and bit, a half-dozen diamond-pointed drills, a box of timers, and a coil fuse, three tempered-steel chisels, a tiny sperm-oil lantern and the steel "jimmy" which had already been tested against the obdurate transom.

Then, skilfully relaxing the metallic cable strands, he as carefully graduated his current and attached his sounder, first to one wire and then to another. Each time that the little Bunnell sounder was galvanized into articulate life he bent his ear and listened to the busy clattering of the dots and dashes, as the reports of races, as the weights and names of jockeys, and lists of entries and statements of odds and conditions went speeding into the busy keys of the big poolroom below, where men and women waited with white and straining faces, and sorrowed and rejoiced as the ever-fluctuant goddess of chance brought them ill luck or success.

But Durkin paid little attention to these flying messages winging cityward from race-tracks so many miles away. What he was in search of was the private wire leading from Penfield's own office, whereon instructions and information were secretly hurried about the city to his dozen and one fellow-operators. It was from this wire that Durkin hoped, without "bleeding" the circuit, to catch some thread of fact which might make the task before him more lucid and direct.

He worked for an hour, connecting and disconnecting, testing and listening and testing still again, before the right wire fell under his thumb. Then he listened intently, with a little start, for he knew he was reading an operator

whose bluff, heavy, staccato "send" was as familiar to his long-practiced ear as a well-known face would be to his watching eyes.

It was MacNutt himself who was "sending." His first intercepted message was an order, to some confederate unknown, to have a carriage call for him at eight. That, Durkin told himself, was worth knowing. His second despatch was a warning to a certain "Al" Mackenzie not to fail to meet Penfield in Albany, Sunday, at midnight. The third message was brief, and seemed to be an answer to a question which had escaped the interloper.

"Yes, I've got her here, and here she stays. Things will happen tonight."

"Ah!" ejaculated Durkin, as he wiped his moist forehead, while the running dots and dashes resolved themselves into the two intelligible sentences.

Then he looked about him, at the leaden sky, at the roofs and walls and windows of the crowded and careless city, as a *sabreur* about to enter the arena might look about him on life for perhaps the last time.

"Yes," he said, with an oath of finality, "things *will* happen tonight."

XVIII

THE WAKING CIRCUIT

It was a thick and heavy night, with a drizzle of fine rain blanketing the city. Every now and then a lonely carriage spluttered along the oily and pool-strewn pavement of the cross-street. Every now and then, too, the rush and clang of the Broadway cars echoed down the canyon of rain-swept silence.

Durkin waited until the lights of the cigar-store went out. Then he once more circled the block, keeping to the shadows. As he passed the darkened cigar-store for the second time his foot, as though by accident, came sharply in contact with the refracting-prismed manhole cover which

had sounded so hopefully hollow to his previous tread. It was loose.

He stooped quickly, to turn up his trousers. As he did so three exploring fingers worked their way under the ledge of the unsecured circle of iron and glass. It came away without resistance. He looked about him cautiously, without straightening up; then he carefully lowered his leather tool-bag into the passage below, and as guardedly let himself down after it.

He waited and listened for a minute or two, before replacing the cover above him. From the river, in the distance, he could hear the booming and tooting of the steam craft through the fog. A hurrying car rumbled and echoed past on the Broadway tracks. Two drunken wanderers went singing westward in the drizzling rain. Then everything was silence again.

Durkin replaced the covering, noiselessly, and feeling to right and left with his outstretched hands, crept inward through the narrow tunnel in which he found himself. His fingers came in touch with the chilly surface of a steel-faced door. It sounded heavy and unyielding to his tentative tap, and his left hand was already reaching back for the tool-bag which hung by a strap over his shoulder when his questioning right hand, pushing forward, discovered that the door was unlocked, and swung easily outward, without resistance.

He felt and fondled the heavy bolts, meditatively, puzzled why it should be so, until he remembered seeing the half-dozen pieces of anthracite lying about the manhole on the sidewalk above. That, he told himself, possibly explained it.

But before he crept into the wider and higher passage before him he paused to take out the revolver which he carried in his hip pocket, to unlimber it, and carefully feel over the chambered cylinder, to make sure every cartridge head stood there, in place. This done, he replaced it, not at his hip, but loosely in the right-hand pocket of his coat. Then he once more began feeling his way along

the smooth cement floor. He was enveloped in a darkness as absolute as though he had been shrouded in black velvet—even the glimmer of the refracted street lamps did not penetrate further than the doorway of the first tunnel.

He had to feel his way about the entire circle of that second narrow chamber before he came to where the inner doorway stood. It, too, was unlocked, and for the first time some sense of being trapped, some latent suspicion of artfully concealed duplicity, flashed through his questioning mind. He listened, and was greeted by nothing but silence.

Then he swung the door softly and slowly open. As he did so he leaped back and to one side, with his right hand in his coat pocket, for there smote on his ears the sharp clang and tinkle of metal. He stood there, crouched, for a waiting minute, and then he laughed aloud, for he knew it was only the sound of some piece of falling iron on the cement floor. To make sure of it, he groped about the floor and stumbled on the little bar of steel that had fallen. Yet why it had been there, leaning against the door, he could not comprehend. It showed him one thing, however; its echoing fall had demonstrated to him that the room he had entered was both higher and larger than the one he had left. It might be nothing more than a furnace-room, yet he told himself that he must be on his guard, that from now on his perils began.

Then he wondered why he should feel this premonitory sense, and in what lay the dividing line, and where lay the difference. Yet as he stood there, with his back against the wall, he felt something dormant and deep-seated stirring within him. It was not a sense of danger; it arose from no outward and tangible manifestations. But somewhere, and persistently, at the root of his being, he heard that subliminal and submerged voice which could be neither silenced nor understood.

He took three groping paces for-

ward, as if to put distance between himself and this foundationless emotion which he was struggling to defy. But for the second time he stood stock-still, weighed down by the feeling of some presence, oppressed by the sense of something impending and imminent. He felt, as Mame had once said, how like a half-articulate key, at the end of an impoverished circuit, consciousness really was; how the spirit so often, in this only half-intelligible life of theirs, flutters feebly with hints and suggestions to which it could never give open and unequivocal utterance. Even language, and language the most artful and finished, was, after all, merely a sort of clumsy Morse—its unwieldy dots and dashes left many a mood of the soul unknown and inarticulate.

As he stood there, in doubt, questioning himself and that vague but disturbing something which stood before him, he decided to put a summary end to the matter. Fumbling in his pocket, and disregarding any risk which the movement might entail, he caught up a match and struck it.

As he shaded the flame and threw it before him, his straining eyes caught only the glimmer of burnished metal—a guard-rail of some description—and the dark and ponderous mass of what seemed a deposit vault.

The match burned down, and dropped from his upthrust fingers. He decided to grope to the rail and feel along the metal until he reached some point of greater safety. He extended his fingers before him, as a blind man might, and took one shuffling step forward.

Then a thought came to him, with the suddenness and the shock of an electric current, as a radiating tingle of nerves, followed by a strangely sickening sense of hollowness about the chest, swept through his body. *Could it be Mame herself in danger, and wanting him?*

More than once, in the past, he had felt that mysterious medium, more fluid and unfathomable than electricity itself, carry its vague but vital mes-

sage in to him. He had felt that call of Soul to Soul, across space, along channels less tangible than Hertzian waves themselves, yet bearing its broken message, which later events had authenticated and still later cross-questioning had doubly verified. He had felt, at such moments, that there were ghostly and phantasmal wires connecting mind with mind; that across these telepathic wires one anxious spirit could hold dim converse with the other; that the Soul itself had its elusive wireless, and forever carried and gave out and received its countless messages—if only the fellow-Soul had learned to await the signal and disentangle the dark and runic Code. Yes, he told himself, consciousness was like that little glass tube which electricians called a coherer, and all his vague impressions and mental-gropings were those disorderly, minute fragments of nickel and silver which only leaped into continuity and order under the shock and impact of those fleet and foreign electric waves, which floated from some sister consciousness aching with its undelivered messages. And the woman who had so often called to him across space and silence, in the past, was now sounding the mystic key across those ghostly wires. But what the message was, or from what quarter it came, he could not tell.

He stood there tortured and puzzled, torn by fear, thrilled and stirred through every fiber of his anxious body. This was followed by a sense of terror, sub-conscious and wordless and irrational, the kind of terror that comes to a child in unknown places, in the dead of some unknown night.

"For the love of God, what is it?" his dry lips demanded, speaking aloud into the emptiness about him.

He waited, almost as if expecting some answering voice, as distinct and tangible as his own. But nothing broke the black silence that blanketed him in from the rest of all the world and all its living things. The sweat of agony came out on his face; his

body hung forward, relaxed and expectant.

"What is it you want to say?" he repeated, in a hoarse and muffled scream, no longer able to endure that silent and nameless Something which surrounded him. "What is it you want to say?"

XIX

THE CLOSED SWITCH

In the ensuing silence, as the unbroken seconds dragged themselves on, Durkin called himself a fool, and, struggling bitterly with that indeterminate uneasiness which possessed him, pulled himself together for some immediate and decisive action. He could waste no more time, he told himself, in foolish spiritualistic séances with his own shadow. He had too much before him, and too short a time in which to do it. His troubles, when he came to face them, would be realities, and not a train of vapid and morbid self-vaporings.

He advanced further into the darkness of the room, slowly, with his hands outstretched before him. Then, for a second time, and for no outward reason, he came to a dead halt. He felt as if some elusive influence, some unnamable force, were holding and barring him back. Again he struck a match, recklessly, and again he saw nothing but the burnished metal railing and the dark mass of the vault.

It was with almost a touch of exasperation that he stood there in his tracks, and slowly, methodically, thoroughly, surveyed the four quarters of the lightless room in which he found himself. He scrutinized the heavy, enmuffling gloom with straining eyes, first in one direction and then in another.

There was nothing to be seen, and not a sound reached his ears. He had been in the room perhaps not three minutes, yet it seemed to him as many hours. Then he peered about him still again, wondering, for the first

time, by what psychological accident his eyes turned in one particular direction, slightly above and before him, to the right of the direction in which he was advancing.

To rid himself of this new idea, and to decentralize the illusion, he shifted his position. But still his gaze, almost against his will, turned back toward the former point, as though the blanketing blackness held some core, some discernible central point toward which he was compelled to look, as the magnetic needle is compelled to swing toward the North. Surrendering to this impulse, he gaped through the darkness at it, with a little oath of impatience.

As he did so he began to feel stir at the base of his spine a tiny tremor of apprehension, which seemed suddenly to explode into a mounting shudder of fear, flashing and leaping through his body until the very hair of his head was stirred and moved with it.

The next moment the startled body responded to clamoring volition, and he turned and fled blindly back into the outer passageway, with a ludicrous and half-articulate little howl of terror.

For growing out of the utter blackness he had seen two vague points of light, two luminous spots, side by side, taking on, as he faced them, all the mysteries of all the primeval night which man ever faced. He felt like a hunter, in some jungled midnight, a midnight breathless and soundless, who looks before him, and slowly discerns two glowing and motionless balls of fire—who can see nothing else, in all his world—but from those two phosphorescent points of light knows that he is being watched and stalked and hunted by some padded Hunger lurking behind them.

In the unbroken and absolute silence which seemed to mock at his foolish and stampeding fears, an immediate reaction of spirit set in. He felt almost glad for this material target against which to fling his terrors, for this precipitation of apprehension into something tangible. He groped through his bag cautiously, for his

little sperm-oil lantern. Then he took up the revolver that lay loosely in his coat pocket. A moment later a thin little shaft of light danced and fingered about the inner room.

He could, at first, see nothing but the line of burnished copper stretching across his path and flashing the light back in his eyes. Behind this, a moment later, he made out the dark and gloomy mass of the black safe. Then he looked deeper, with what was still again a flutter of enigmatical fear about his heart, for that twin and ghostlike glow which had filled him with such precipitate terror.

But there was no longer anything to be seen. He played his interrogative finger of light up and down, and it was a full minute before his slowly-adjusting sight penetrated to the remoter and higher area of the surrounding walls.

It was then, and not till then, that he discovered the fact that the wall on his right opened and receded, some five feet above the floor-level, into a dimly-outlined alcove. As he looked closer he made out that this alcove had, obviously, been filled by the upper portion of a heavy iron staircase, leading to the floor above. The entire lower half of this stairway, where once it must have obtruded into the vault chamber, had been cut away. It was on the remaining upper portion of this dismantled stairway that his pencil of light played nervously and his gaze was closely riveted.

For there, above his natural line of vision, half-hidden back in the heavy shadows, his startled eyes made out a huddled and shadowy figure. It was a woman's figure, in black, motionless, and bound hand and foot to the iron stair-stanchions.

He did not notice, in that first frenzied glance, the white band that cut across the lower part of her face, so colorless was her skin. But as he looked for the second time, he emitted a sudden cry, half-pity, half-anger, for slowly and thinly it filtered into his consciousness just what and who that watching figure was.

And then, and then only, did he speak. And when he did so he repeated his earlier cry.

"My God, Mame, what is it?"

There was no response, no answering movement or gesture. He called to her again, but still absolute silence confronted him.

As he crept closer to her, step by step, he saw and understood.

The two luminous eyes, burning through the dark, had been his wife's. She had been imprisoned and tied there; but bound and muffled as she was, the strength of her desire, the supremacy of will, had created its new and mysterious wire of communication. Some passion of want, some sheer intensity of feeling, had found and used its warning semaphore. She had spoken to him, without sound or movement. Yet for what?

Yet for what? That was the thought that seemed to pirouette back and forth across the foreground of his busy brain. That was what he wondered and demanded of himself as he clambered and struggled and panted up the wall into the narrow and dusty alcove, and cut away the sodden gag between her aching jaws. The tender flesh was indented and livid, where the cruelly tightened band had pressed in under the cheek-bones. The salivated throat was swollen and speechless. The tongue protruded pitifully, helpless in its momentary paralysis.

"Oh, he'll smart for this! By heaven, he'll smart for this!" declared Durkin, with a malignant oath, as he stooped and cut away the straps that bound her ankles to the obdurate iron, and severed the bands that bruised and held her white wrists. Even then she could not speak, though she smiled a little, faintly and forlornly and gratefully. She struggled to say one word, but it resolved itself into a cacophonous and inarticulate mumble, half-infantile, half-imbecile.

"Oh, he'll pay for this!" repeated the blaspheming man, as he lowered her, limp and inert, to the floor below and leaped down beside her. She sank back with a happy but husky

gasp of weakness, for the benumbed muscles refused to obey, and the cramped and stiffened limbs were unable to support her. All she could do was to hold her husband's hand in her own, in a grateful yet passionate grip. She must have been imprisoned there, he surmised, at least an hour, perhaps two hours.

He started up, in search for water. It might be, he felt, that a lead water-pipe ran somewhere about them. He would cut it without compunction.

He took two steps across the room, when an audible and terrified note of warning broke from her swollen lips. He darted back to her, in wonder, searching her straining face with his little shaft of lantern light.

She did not speak; but he followed her eyes. They were on the burnished copper railing refracting the thin light that danced back and forth across that dungeon-like chamber. He questioned her fixed gaze, but still he did not understand her. She caught his hand, and retained it fiercely. He thought, from her pallor, that she was on the point of fainting, and he would have placed her full length on the hard cement, but she struggled against it, and still kept her hold on his hand.

Then she took the tiny lantern from his fingers, and bending low, tapped with it on the cement. Durkin, listening closely, knew she was sounding the telegrapher's double "I"—the call for attention, implying a message over the wire.

Slowly he spelt out the words as she gave them to him in Morse, irregular and wavering, but still decipherable.

"The—railing—is—charged!"

He took the lantern from her hand, and swung the shaft of light on the glimmering copper. From there he looked back at her face once more.

Then, in one illuminating flash of comprehension, it was all clear to him. With a stare of blank wonder he saw and understood, and fell back appalled at the demoniacal ingenuity of it all.

"I see! I see!" he repeated vacuously.

Then, to make sure of what he had been told, he crossed the room and picked up the bar of steel that had fallen at his feet as he first entered the door. This bar he let fall so that one end would rest on the metal vault-covering and the other on the rail of copper.

There was a report, a sudden leap of flame, and the continued hissing fury of the short-circuited current, until the bar, heated to incandescence, twisted and writhed where it lay like a thing of life.

That was the danger he had so closely skirted! That was the fate which he had escaped! He gazed at the insidious yet implacable agent of death, spluttering its tongue of flame at him like an angry snake, and as he looked his face was beaded with sweat and seemed ashen in color.

Then a sense of the dangers still surrounding them returned to his mind. He shook himself together, and, making a circuit of the room, found the switch and turned off the current. As he did so he gave a little muffled cry of gratitude, for across the rear corner of the room ran two leaden water-pipes. Into one of these he cut and drilled with his pocket-knife, without a moment's hesitation, and was suddenly rewarded by a thin jet of water spraying him in the face.

He caught his hat full of it, and carried it to Mame, who drank from it feverishly and deeply. It not only brought her strength back to her; but, after it, she could speak a little, though huskily, and with considerable pain.

"If you can possibly walk now, we have to get out of here, this minute!"

She nodded her head, and he helped her to her feet. Together, the one leaning heavily on the other's arm, they paced up and down the already flooded floor, until power came back to her aching limbs and steadiness to her tired nerves.

"It would be better not to go together. I'll help you out and give you fifty yards' start. If anything should happen, remember that I'm behind you, and that, after this, I'm ready to

shoot, and shoot without a quaver. But listen. When you get up through the sidewalk grating, keep steadily on for two blocks, toward the west. Then turn north for half a block and go into the family entrance at Kieffer's. If nothing happens, I'll join you there. If anything does occur to keep me back give them to understand that you've missed the last train for your home in East Orange; put this five-dollar bill down and ask for a front room on the second floor. From there you must watch for me. If it's anything dangerous I'll signal you in passing."

By this time he had led her down the narrow, tunnel-like passageway and was helping her up into the rain-swept street.

"Whatever happens, remember that I'm behind you!" he repeated.

Their struggles, as he assisted her up through the narrow opening, were ungainly and ludicrous; yet, incongruously enough, there came to him a fleeting sense of joy in even that accidental and impersonal contact of her hand with his.

Then he braced himself against the narrow brick walls where he stood, appearing a strange and grotesque and bodiless head above the level of the street. Thus peering out he watched her as she beat her way down the wind-swept sidewalk. Already, through the drifting midnight rain, the outline of her figure was losing its distinctness. He was reaching down for his wet and sodden hat to follow her when something happened that left him transfixed, a motionless and bodiless head on which startled horror had suddenly fallen.

For out of the quiet and shadowy south side of the street, where it had been silently patrolling under lowered speed, swerved and darted a wine-colored, surrey-built touring-car with a cape top. Durkin recognized it at a glance; it was Penfield's huge machine. Its movement, as it swung in toward the startled woman, seemed like the swoop of a hawk. It appeared to stop only for a moment, but in that moment two men leaped from the wide-

swung tonneau door. When they clambered into it once more Durkin saw that Mame was between them. And one of the men was MacNutt and the other Keenan.

He heard the one sharp scream that reverberated down the empty street, followed by the fading pulsations of the departing car, when, with an oath of fury, he was already working his arms up through the narrow manhole. As he did so he heard a second, hoarser cry, succeeded by the heavy tramp of hurrying feet, and then a peremptory challenge. Turning sharply, he caught sight of a patrolling roundsman bearing down on him from the corner of Broadway; and he saw that the officer was drawing his revolver as he charged across the wet pavement.

It was already too late to free himself. With an instinctive movement of the hands he caught up the manhole cover, shield-like. As he did so he saw the glimmer of the polished steel and heard the repeated challenge. But he neither paused nor hesitated. He let his knees break under him, and as he fell he saw to it that the rim of the manhole dropped into its waiting circular groove. Then he heard the sound of a shot, of a second and a third, from the policeman's pistol; but as he secured the cover with its chain-lock and dropped down into the tunnel below the reports seemed thin and muffled and far away to Durkin.

A moment later, however, he heard the ominous and vibrant echo of the officer's night-stick on the asphalt frenziedly rapping for assistance.

XX

THE RULING PASSION

BEYOND that first involuntary little cry of startled terror Mabel Durkin uttered no sound as she found herself in the hooded tonneau, wedged in between MacNutt and Keenan. That first outcry, indeed, had been unwilling and reactionary, the last galvanic

movement of an overtried and exhausted apprehension.

A wave of care-free passivity now seemed to inundate her. She made no attempt to struggle; she nursed no sense of open resentment against her captors. The battery of her vital forces was depleted and depolarized. She experienced only a faintly poignant sense of disappointment, of indeterminate pique as she realized that she was no longer a free agent. Leaning back in the cushioned gloom, inert, impassive, with her eyes half-closed, she seemed to be drifting through an eddying veil of gray. The voices so close beside her sounded thin and far off. An impression of unreality clung to her, an impression that she was floating through an empty and blighted and rain-swept world.

"It's not *her* I want—it's Durkin!" MacNutt was saying, with an oath, as they swung around the corner into the blinking and serried lights of Eighth avenue. "It's that damned ground-hog I'm goin' to dig out yet!"

"Well, you can't go back *there* after him!" protested Keenan.

"Can't I? Well, I'm goin' to, and I'm goin' to get that man, and I'm goin' to fry him in his own juices!"

He pushed the woman's inert weight away from him and leaned out from under the cape, with a sharp word or two to Penfield's chauffeur. Then he whistled and waved his arm.

"What are you doing that for?" Keenan demanded of him. Keenan had caught the drooping figure and was making an effort to support it. His face, for some unknown reason, was almost as colorless as the face that lay so passively against his rain-soaked shoulder.

"I'm goin' back! I'm callin' a cab here. I'm goin' to get my hooks on Durkin, even if I have to wade through every raidin' gang in the precinct!"

"And then what?" deprecated Keenan.

"Then I'll meet you at Penfield's house, uptown, and the show will come to a finish!"

"And what am I to do?" demanded

Keenan impatiently. For the approaching four-wheeler had come to a standstill beside them, and MacNutt was already out in the rain.

"You take care o' *that*!" he pointed a contemptuous finger toward the motionless woman, "and mighty good care!"

"But how's all this going to help us out?"

"I'll show you, when the time comes. Here's the key for Penfield's house. You'll find it nice and quiet and secluded there, and if I *do* bring Durkin back with me, by heaven, you'll have the privilege o' seein' a lurid end to this uncommonly lurid game!"

He tossed the key into the tonneau, and Keenan picked it up in silence.

They heard the clatter of the horses' hoofs on the wet asphalt, the sharp closing of the cab door, the rattle of the wheel-tires across the steel car-tracks, and he was gone. A moment later they were dipping up the avenue between two long rows of undulating lights, with the rain drifting in on their faces.

Then Keenan turned and looked down at the woman beside him. During several minutes of unbroken silence Mame had a dim consciousness of his keen and scrutinizing glance, but her mind seemed encaged in a body that was already dead, and she had neither the will nor the power to look up at him.

Then, with no warning word or gesture, he stooped down and kissed her on her heavy red mouth.

At any other time, she knew, she would have fought against that tainting touch; every drop of red blood in her body would have risen to combat it. But now she neither repulsed it nor responded to it. She seemed submerged and smothered in a tide of terrible indifference. She even found herself weighing the meaning of that affront to all that was not ignoble in her. She even caught at it, with an inward gasp of enlightenment. It meant more than she had at first seen. It brought a new scene to the shifting drama; it meant a new turn to the

hurrying game. It meant that if she only waited, and could be wise and wary and calculating, she still might hug to her breast some tattered hope for the impending end.

She knew that Keenan was still watching her; she knew that he was, in some manner, being torn between contending feelings, and that some obliterating impulse was falling between him and that grim concert of forces of which he was a member. It was as old as the world, she tried to tell herself soothingly; it was Paris in the halls of Menelaus when he first let his eyes fall on Helen; it was Anthony, Tannhäuser, Adam himself!

And what was she, then? That was the question she asked herself, with a little sobbing gasp—what was she, trading thus, even in thought, on her bruised and wearied body? What had she fallen to, what was it that had deadened all that was softer and better and purer within her, that she could thus see slip away from her the last solace and dignity of her womanhood?

There, she told herself bitterly, lay the degradation and the ultimate danger of the life she had led. It was there that the grimmer tragedy came into her career. The surrender of ever greater and greater hostages to expediency, the retreat to ever meaner and meaner instruments of activity, the gradual induration of heart and soul, the desperate and even more desperate search for self-deceiving extenuations, for self-blinding condonement, for pitiful and distorting self-propitiation—in these lay the inward corruption, more implacably and more terribly tragic than any outward blow! She had once deluded herself with the thought that a life of crime might lose at least half of its evil by losing all of its grossness. She had thought to hold some inmost self aloof and immune. She had dreamed that some inward irreproachability of thought, some light-hearted tact of open conduct, might leave still untainted that deeper core of thought and feeling which she had long thought of as conscience, while some deceiving and sophistical trans-

mutation of values whispered to her adroitly that in some way all good was bad, and all bad was in some way good.

But that, she now knew, was a mockery. She was the sum of all that she had thought and acted. She was a disillusioned and degraded and unscrupulous woman, steeped in enormities so dark that it appalled and sickened her even to recall them. She was only the empty and corroded shell of a woman, all that once aspired and lived and hoped in her eaten away by the acid currents of that underground world into which she had fallen.

Yet rather than it should end in that slow and mean and sordid inner tragedy of the spirit, she told herself, she would fling open her last arsenal of passion and come to her end in some ironic blaze of glory that would at least lend sinister radiance to a timelessly base and sorry eclipse. So she lay back in Keenan's clasp quiescently, unresistingly, but watchfully.

XXI

THE CROWN OF IRON

DURKIN's first feeling, as he scrambled to his feet and half-stumbled, half-groped his way along the narrow, tunnel-like passage, was an untimely and impotent and almost delirious passion to get out into the open and fight—fight to the last, if need be, for all that narrowing life still held for him. This feeling was followed by a quick sense of frustration as he realized his momentary helplessness and how comprehensive and relentless seemed the machinery of intrigue opposing him.

Yet, he told himself with that lightning-like rapidity of thought which came to him at such moments of peril, however intricate and vast the machinery, however carefully planned the line of impending campaign, the human element would be an essential part of it. And his last forlorn hope, his final fighting chance, lay in the

fact that wherever the human element entered there also entered weakness and passion and accident. What now remained to him, he warned himself, as he hurriedly locked and barred the two steel doors which shut off the first and second passageway, was to think quickly and act decisively. Somewhere, at some unforeseen moment, his chance might still come to him.

As for himself, he felt that he was safe enough, for the time being. The officer who had detected him in the manhole would be sure to follow up a case so temptingly suspicious. The police, in turn, could take open advantage of his forced and illegal presence there to investigate a quarter which for many months must have been under suspicion. But, under any circumstances, well guarded as that poolroom fortress stood, its resistance could be only a matter of time, and of strictly limited time, once the reserves were on the scene.

Durkin's first thought, accordingly, was of the roof, for, so far as he knew, all escape from the ground floor was even then cut off. Yet the first door leading from the vault chamber he found to be steel-bound and securely locked. He surmised, with a gasp of consternation, that the doors above him would be equally well secured. He remembered that Penfield never did things by halves, and he felt that his only escape lay in that upward flight.

So he saw that it was to be a grim race in demolition; that while he was to gnaw and eat his way upward through steel and brick, like a starving rat boring its passage up through the chambers of a huge granary, his pursuers would be pounding and battering at the lower doors in just as frenzied pursuit.

He no longer hesitated, but moved with that clear-thoughted rapidity of action which often came to him in his moments of half-delirium. Turning to his tool-bag and scooping out his bar of soap, he kneaded together enough of the nitro-glycerine from one of the stout rubber bags to make a mixture of the consistency of liquid

honey. This he quickly but carefully worked into the crack of the obstructing door. Then he attached and shortened and lighted his fuse, scuttling back to the momentary shelter of the outer passage and waiting behind the steel-bound door for the coming detonation. The sound of it smote him like a blow on the chest, followed by a rush of air and a sudden feeling of nausea.

But he did not wait. He groped his way in, relocked the passage door and crawled on all fours through the smoke and heavy, malodorous gases.

The remnants of the blasted door hung, like a tattered pennon, on one twisted hinge, and his way now lay clear to the ladder of grilled ironwork leading to the floor above. But here the steel trapdoor again barred his progress. One sharp twist and wrench with his steel lever, however, tore the bolt-head from its setting, and in another half-minute he was standing on the closed door above, shutting out the noxious smoke from the basement.

Between him and the stairway stood still another fortified door, heavier than the others. He did not stop to knead his paste, for already he could hear the crash of glass and the sound of sledges on the door at the rear of the cigar-shop. Catching up a strand of what he knew to be the most explosive of all guncottons—it was cellulose-hexanitrate—he worked it gently into the open keyhole and again scuttled back to safety as the fuse burnt down.

He could feel the building shake with the tremor of the detonation, shake and quiver like a ship pounded by strong head seas. He noticed, too, as he mounted the narrow stairs before him, that he was bleeding at the nose. But this, he told himself, was no time for resting, for at the head of the second stairway still another sheet of armored steel blocked his passage, and still again the hurried, hollow detonation shook the building.

As he twisted and pried with his steel lever at the lock of the trapdoor that stood between him and the open air of the housetop he could already hear the telltale splintering of wood and

sharp orders and muffled cries and the approaching, quick trampling of feet. He fought at the lock like a madman, for by this time the trampling feet were mounting the upper stairs, and doors were being battered and wrenched from their hinges.

"Good!" he cried, in his frenzied delight. "Give it to them good! Wreck 'em, once for all; put 'em out of the business!"

Then he gave a sudden relieving "Ah!"—for the sullen wood had surrendered its bolts, and the door swung open to his upward push. The night wind, cold and damp and clean, swept his hot and grimy face as he pulled himself up through the opening.

Even as he did so he heard the gathering sounds below him growing clearer and clearer. He squatted low in the darkness, and with a furtive eye ever on the dismantled trapdoor, groped his way, gorilla-like, closer and closer to the wall against which he knew the janitor's ladder to be still leaning.

Then he dropped flat on his face, and wormed his way toward the nearest chimney, not twelve feet from him, for a wet helmet had emerged from the trap opening. A moment later a lantern was flashing and playing about the rainy roof.

"We've got 'em! Quick, Lanigan; we've got 'em!" cried the helmeted head exultantly, from the trapdoor, to someone below.

The next moment Durkin, prone on his face, heard the crack of a revolver and the impact of the ball as it ricocheted from the roof-tin, not a yard from his feet.

He no longer tried to conceal himself, but, rolling and tumbling toward the eave-cornice, let himself over, and hung and clung there by his hands, while a second ball whistled over him.

He felt desperately along the flat brick surface, with his kicking feet, wondering if he had misjudged his direction, sick with a fear that he might be dangling over an open abyss. He shifted the weight of his body along the cornice ledge, still pawing and feeling, feverishly and ridiculously,

with his gyrating limbs. Then a wave of relief swept through him. The ladder was there, and his feet were already on its second step.

As he ran, cat-like, across the lower apartment-house roof, he knew that he stood in full range of his pursuers above, and he knew that by this time they were already crowding out to the cornice-ledge. He did not pause to look back at them, to weigh either the problem or the possible consequences in his mind; he only remembered that that afternoon he had noticed five crowded lines of washing swinging in multi-colored disarray at the back of that many-familied hive of life. He hesitated only once, at the sheer edge of the roof, to make sure, in the uncertain half-light, that he was above those crowded lines.

"Let him have it—there he goes!" cried a voice above, and at that too warning note his hesitation took wing.

Durkin leaped out into space, straddling the first line of sodden clothes as he fell. Even in that brief flight the thought came to his mind that it would have been infinitely better for him if the falling rain had not weighted and flattened those sagging lines of washing. Then he remembered, more gratefully, that it was probably only because of the rain that they still swung there.

As his weight came on the first line it snapped under the blow, as did the second, which he clutched with his hands, and the third, which he doubled over, limply, and the fourth, which cut up under his arm-pit. But as he went downward he carried that ever-growing avalanche of cotton and woolen and linen with him, so that when his sprawling figure smote the stone court it fell muffled and hidden in a web of tangled garments.

XXII

THE STRAITS OF CHANCE

How his flight ended Durkin never clearly remembered. He had a dim

and uneasy memory of the lapse of time, either great or little, the confused recollection of waking to his senses and fighting his way free from a smothering weight of wet and clinging clothes. As he struggled to his feet a stab of pain shot through his left hand and up through his forearm. It was so keen and penetrating that he surmised, in his blank and unreasoning haste, that he must have torn a chord or broken a bone in his wrist. But on a matter like that, he felt, he could now waste no time.

If he had, indeed, been unconscious, he concluded, it had been but momentary. For as he groped about in search of his hat, dazed and bruised, he found himself still alone and unmolested. Creeping through the apartment-house cellar, and out past the snoring and still undisturbed janitor's door, he crouched for a waiting moment or two behind an overloaded garbage can in the area.

Hearing nothing, he staggered up the narrow stairs to the level of the sidewalk, wet and ragged and disheveled, blackened and soiled and begrimed. The street seemed deserted.

He felt sick and faint and shaken, but he would not give up. He half-stumbled, half-staggered along, splashing through little pools of rain held in depressions of the stone sidewalk, supporting himself on anything that offered, hoping, if this were indeed the end, that he might crawl away into some dark and secluded corner of the city, to hide the humiliating ignominy of it all.

In front of a Chinese laundry window he saw that he could go no further. His first impulse was to creep inside, and make an effort to bribe his way to secrecy, although he knew that within another quarter of an hour the tightening cordon of the police would entirely surround the block.

As he swayed there, hesitating, he heard the thunder of hoofs and the rumble of wheel-tires on the soggy asphalt. His first apprehensive thought was that it would prove to

be a patrol-wagon, with police reserves from some neighboring precinct. But as he blinked through the darkness he made out a high-platformed Metropolitan Milk Company's delivery-wagon swinging down toward him.

He staggered, with a slow and heavy wading motion, out to the centre of the street, a strange and spectral figure, with outstretched arms, uttering a sharp and halting cry or two.

The driver pulled up, thirty long and dreary feet past him.

"What in hell d'you want?" he demanded irately, raising his whip to start his team once more, as he caught a clearer view of the seemingly drunken figure.

"I'll give you a fiver," said Durkin thickly, "if you'll gi' me a lift!"

He held the money in his hand, as he stumbled and panted to the wagon-step. That put an end to all argument.

"Climb in, then—quick!" cried the big driver, as he caught his passenger by a tattered coat sleeve and helped him up into the high-perched seat.

"But for the love o' God, who's been doin' things to you?" he went on in amazement, as he saw the bruised and bleeding and ash-colored face.

"They threw me out o' their damned dope shop!" cried Durkin, with an only half-simulated thickness of utterance, as he jerked a shaking thumb toward the lights of the Chinese laundry. "And I guess—I'm—I'm a bit knocked out!"

For he felt very weak and faint and weary, though the cold rain and the open night air beat on his upturned face with a sting that was gratefully refreshing.

"They certainly did make a mess o' you!" chortled the unmoved driver, as they rumbled westward and took the corner with a skid of the great wheels that struck fire from even the wet car-tracks. He tucked the bill down in his oil-coat pocket.

"Where d'you want to go?" he asked more feelingly.

"Where d'you go?" parried Durkin.

"Hoboken Ferry, for th' Lackawanna Number Eight!"

"Then that'll do me," answered the other weakly.

He leaned back in his high and rocking seat, grasping the back rail with his right hand. He felt as if the waves of a troubled and tumultuous sea were throwing him up, broken and torn, on some island of possible safety. He felt dizzy, as though he were being tossed and plunged forward to some narrow bar of impending release and rest. He did not ask of himself just what seas boomed and thundered on the opposing side of that narrow stretch of promised security. He knew that they were there, and he knew that the time would soon come when he must face and feel them about him. He had once demanded rest; but he knew that there now could be no rest for him. He might hide for a day or two, like a hunted animal with its hurt, but the hounds of destiny would soon be at his heels again. All he asked, he told himself, was his man's due right of momentary relapse, his breathing spell of quietness. He was already too stained and scarred with life to look for the staidly upholstered sanctuaries, the padded seclusions of simple and honest wayfarers. He was broken and undone, but his day would come again.

He looked at his limp and trailing left hand. To his consternation, he saw that it dripped blood. He tried to push back his coat sleeve, but the pain was more than he could endure. So with his right hand he lifted the helpless arm up before his eyes, and for the first time saw the splinter of bone that protruded from the torn flesh, just below the wrist-joint.

He felt for his handkerchief, dizzily, and tried to bandage the wound. This he never accomplished, for with a sudden little gasp he fainted away, and fell prone across the oil-skinned lap of the big driver.

That astounded person drew up in alarm at the side entrance of a street-corner saloon. He was on the point of repeating his sturdy call for help,

when a four-wheeler swung in beside his wagon-step, and delivered itself of a square-shouldered, heavy-jawed man who took in the situation with a rapid and comprehensive glance of relief.

"So there he is, at last!" he said, as he came forward and caught up the relaxed and still unconscious figure.

"Where'd you get a license for buttin' in on this?" expostulated the surprised driver.

"Buttin' in?" cried the newcomer, as he lifted the limp figure in his great, gorilla-like arms. "This isn't buttin' in—this is takin' care o' my own friends!"

"Friend o' yours, then, is he?" queried the weakening driver.

"A friend o' mine!" cried the other angrily, for his man was already safely in the cab. "You damned can-slinger, d'you suppose I'm wastin' cab-fare doin' church rescue work? Of course he's a friend o' mine.

"And not only that," he added, under his breath, as he swung up into the cab and gave the driver the number of Penfield's uptown house, "and not only that—he's a friend o' mine who's worth just a little over a quarter of a million to me!"

XXIII

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

It was slowly, almost reluctantly, that Durkin returned to full and clear-thoughted consciousness. Even before he had opened his eyes he realized that he was in a hurrying carriage, for he could feel the sway and jolt of the cushioned seat. He could also hear the beat of the falling rain on the hood-leather and the glass of the door beside him as he lay back in the damp odors of wet and sodden upholstery.

Then he opened his eyes slowly and saw that it was MacNutt beside him. The discovery neither moved nor startled him; he merely let the heavy lids fall over his tired eyes and lay there, without a movement or a sign. Tatter by tatter he pieced together the

history of the past few hours, and as memory came tardily back to him he knew, in a dim and subliminal way, that he would soon need every alertness of mind and body which he could summon to his help. But still he waited, passive and unbetraying, fighting against a weakness born of great pain and fatigue.

He was keenly conscious of the cab's abrupt stopping, of the passing of money between MacNutt and the lean and dripping night-hawk holding the reins, of being half-carried and half-dragged, in the great, bear-like grasp of his captor, across the wet sidewalk to the foot of a flight of brownstone mansion steps. Instead of mounting these steps, however, MacNutt hauled him limply in under their shadow to the basement door opening off the stone-flagged area. There, after fumbling with his keys for a moment or two, he quietly unlocked the heavy outer grating of twisted ironwork and then the inner door of oak. Durkin made a mental note of the fact that both of these doors were in turn locked after them.

The two then made their way through the darkness down what must have been a long passage. Then MacNutt softly opened a door on the right, and, after listening for a cautious moment or two, as softly entered the room into which this door led. And still again a key was turned and withdrawn from the lock.

Even with his eyes closed Durkin, as he lay there husbanding his strength, was conscious of the sudden light that flooded the room. Covertly opening that eye which remained in the heavy shadow, separating the lashes by little more than the width of a hair, he could make out a large room, upholstered and carpeted in green, with green-shaded electroliers above two billiard tables that stood ghastly and bier-like beneath their blanketing covers of white cotton. Against the walls stood massive, elephantine club chairs of green fumed oak, and it was into one of these that MacNutt had dropped the inert and unresponding Durkin. At the

far end of the room the stealthy observer could make out what was assuredly the entrance to an electric elevator. In fact, as he looked closer he could see the two mother-of-pearl buttons which controlled the apparatus; for it was plain that this elevator was one of those automatic lifts not uncommon in city residences of the more palatial order. Then, as he quietly but busily speculated on the significance of this discovery Durkin suddenly caught sight of a triple crescent carved on the arm of the chair against which he leaned. And as he made out that familiar device he knew that he was in Penfield's uptown house, once used as his residence and later as his private clubrooms.

At that discovery his alert but well-veiled glance went back to MacNutt. He saw his captor fling off his wet and draggled raincoat and then shake the water from a dripping hat-brim. This he seemed to do without haste and without emotion.

Durkin next saw his enemy gaze about the entire circle of the room scrutinizingly, the subdolous green eyes coming to a rest only when they fell on his own relaxed figure.

"And this is where the music starts!" muttered MacNutt aloud, as he strode toward Durkin.

Even before he had uttered that half-articulate little sentence his captive was possessed by a sudden conviction of approaching climax. He knew, somewhere deep in the tangled roots of consciousness, that either he or the other must go down that night, that one was destined to win and that the other was destined to lose, that the ancient fight was about to be settled, and settled for all time.

In that agonized and hurried and yet lucid-thoughted summing up of ultimate values Durkin realized that it would be useless to resist what was immediately before him. He was too shaken and weak for any crude battle of brute strength against brute strength. With his wounded hand, which even then sent throbbing spears of pain from finger-tip to shoulder, and with

his bruised and weary and stiffened body, he knew that any test of strength in the muscular and ape-like arms of MacNutt was out of the question. So he lay back, weak and unresisting, every now and then emitting from his half-opened lips a little moan of pain.

But behind the torn and battered ramparts of the seemingly comatose body his vigilant mind paced and watched and kept keenly awake. As he felt the great hands pad and feel about his body, and the searching fingers go through his clothes, pocket after pocket, some sentinel intelligence seemed to watch and burn and glow like a coal deep within the ashes of all his outer fatigue. He waited quiescent, as he felt the heated, animal-like breath on his face, as the ruthlessly exploring hands tore open his vest, as they ripped away the inner pocket which had been so carefully sewn together at the top, as they drew out the tied and carefully sealed packet of papers for which he had been searching.

More than once Durkin had thought that if ever those documents, for which he had endured and suffered and lost so much, were again wrested from him, it would be only after some moment of transcendent conflict, after some momentous battle of life's forlornest last reserves. Yet now, impassively and ignominiously, he was surrendering them to the conqueror, supinely, meanly, without even the solace of some supreme if vain resistance! He listened to MacNutt's gloating little "Ah!" of triumph without sign or movement. But, even then, in that moment of seeming frustration, Durkin's subterranean yet terrible pertinaciousness, his unparaded bull-dog indefatigability, glowed and burned at its brightest. They were not yet in their last ditch.

"That's *one* part of it!" muttered MacNutt, as he stowed away the packet and rebuttoned his coat.

It was a shadowed and lupine eye which Durkin cautiously opened as he felt more than heard MacNutt's quick footsteps on the carpeted floor. Cov-

ertly, and without moving, he saw the other man walk to the elevator, saw the play of his finger on the mother-of-pearl button, saw the automatic door noiselessly slide away, and the descended and waiting cage locked on a level with the floor. He saw MacNutt step inside, and the finger again play on one of a row of five pearl buttons set in the polished wood of the cage-wall, and the elevator noiselessly ascend.

The moment it went up Durkin was on his feet.

He first ran to the two doors at the opposite end of the billiard-room. They were both securely locked; and they were his only means of escape. Then he hurriedly circled the two huge tables, in search of some implement of defense. But the denuded room offered nothing.

Then he dashed to the elevator shaft. As he had surmised, it was an automatic electric lift, operating from the cellar below to the top of the house. The cage, so far as he could make out, now stood opposite the third floor. The controlling apparatus, the dynamo from which the power wires led, was, of course, in the cellar beneath him. It would be easy enough to twist one of the billiard-table covers into a rope, and drop down to the shaft-bottom, twelve feet below. There he could tie a bit of string to the emergency switch, watch the first movement of the descending cage, and shut off the current at the right moment. That would mean that the descending cage, robbed of its power, would hang a dead weight in its steel channel, the safety brake would automatically apply itself, and anybody within the cage would remain locked and imprisoned there, helpless to descend or ascend, hemmed in by the four blank walls of the shaft.

He decided not even to waste time on twisting up a table-cover. He would hang by his right hand, and drop to the bottom. But a sudden glint and flutter of light reminded him of his danger. The cage was descending.

It was only a matter of seconds before MacNutt stepped once more from the cage into the billiard-room, yet as he did so he saw nothing but the limp and relaxed form of Durkin, huddled back in his huge chair, emitting from between his half-parted lips an occasional weak groan of pain.

A gloating and half-demoniacal chuckle broke from the newcomer's lips. In one hand he carried a decanter of brandy, in the other a seltzer siphon. Durkin could hear the gurgle and ripple of the liquid into the glass; a moment later he knew that MacNutt was bending over him.

"Here, you, wake up out o' that!" he said, with still another chuckle of ominous glee.

He shook the relaxed figure roughly.

"Get awake, there! This is *too* good—this is something you can't afford to miss, you damned welcher!"

He poured the scalding liquor down the other's throat. Some of it spilled and ran into the hollow of his neck; some of it dribbled on his limp collar and his coat-lapels. But Durkin took what he could, and was glad of it.

"Kind o' recalls our first meetin', eh?" demanded MacNutt, as he watched the other slowly open his wondering eyes. "Kind o' remind you of the day I loosened you up with brandy and seltzer, that first time I had to drag and coax you into this dirty business?"

And again his captor laughed, wickedly, mirthlessly.

"Go on take some more! I'm goin' to give you enough to light you all to glory!" he gloated. And still he poured the liquor down the unresisting man's throat.

He dragged the other to his feet.

"Come on now, quick! There's a little scene waitin' for you upstairs—something that'll kind o' soothe and console you for gettin' so done up!"

They were in the elevator by this time, mounting noiselessly upward. Durkin could feel the fire of the brandy soar up to his brain and sing through his veins. MacNutt supported him as they stepped from the elevator

cage into a darkened room. On the far side of this room, from between two heavy portières, a gash of light cut into the otherwise unbroken gloom.

A sound of voices floated out to them and MacNutt tightened his grip on the other's arm, as they stood and listened, for it was Mabel Durkin and Keenan talking together, hurriedly, impetuously, earnestly.

"But does it make any difference what I have been, or who I am?" the woman's voice was asking. "I did my part; I did my work for you, and now you ought to give me a chance!"

Still holding the other back, MacNutt circled sidewise, until they came into the line of vision with the unsuspecting pair in the other room. Keenan, they could see, held one heavy hand on the woman's shoulder intimately; and she, in turn, looked up into his face, in an attitude as open and intimate.

"But I *am* giving you a chance," Keenan next replied, and his long, melancholy Celtic face was white and colorless with emotion. "I'm giving you the only chance that life holds for both of us!"

"I know it!" said the woman. Keenan's arms went out to her, and she did not draw back. Instead, she reached up her own seemingly wearied and surrendering arms, without a word, and held him there in her obliterating embrace. He swayed a little, where he stood, and for a moment neither moved nor spoke.

MacNutt, narrowly watching the shadowy face of Durkin, saw pictured on that pallid and changing countenance fear and revolt, one momentary touch of despairing doubt, and then a mounting and all-consuming passion of blind rage. In that drunken rage seemed to culminate all his misgivings, his suspicions, his apparent betrayals of the past. He trembled and shook like a man in a vertigo; the fingers of his upraised right hand opened and closed spasmodically; his flaccid lips fell apart vacuously, insanely.

"I'll kill her!" he ejaculated under his breath.

MacNutt knew that his moment had come. Without a spoken word he caught his revolver up from his coat pocket and thrust it, craftily, into the other man's hand.

The insane fingers closed on the handle of it, the glaring and expressionless eye peered along the steadying barrel. MacNutt held his breath, and waited.

The woman under the white light of the electrolier drew back from Keenan, with her eyes still on his face, so that her head and shoulders stood out, a target of black against the white foreground. Then she drew one hand quickly across her forehead, and, wheeling slowly, let her puzzled glance sweep the entire circle of the room, until once more her eyes rested upon the expectant eyes of Keenan.

Then a change swept over her face, a light of exaltation leaped into her dilated pupils, and her hand went up to her heart.

Was it some small sound or movement that she had heard, or was it some minute vibration of floor that she had felt?

"*Fim, it's you!*" she shrilled out suddenly, into the heavy silence, in a tense and high soprano, with a voice not like her own.

"*Fim, where are you?*" she called passionately, as she beat Keenan impotently back with her naked hands. "Help me, quick! Can't you see I need you? Can't you see that this is killing me?"

Keenan fell back before her, aghast.

"You fool, you weak fool!" she shrieked at him madly. "Do you think I meant that? Do you dream I could respect or care for an animal like you! Do you imagine I would endure the touch of your hands, if it wasn't to save me till this? Do you dream——?"

She stopped suddenly, for with one sweep of his advancing arm Durkin tore the heavy portière from its curtain-rings, and he stood before them, in the flat white light of the electrics.

XXIV

THE LAST DITCH

DURKIN advanced into the room quickly, the revolver in his right hand. It was a short-barreled bull-dog gun of heavy caliber, ugly and menacing as it swung from his upthrust wrist. In the doorway stood MacNutt, momentarily bewildered.

As Durkin edged craftily round, with his back to the side wall, so that his eye commanded the silent trio before him, Mame made a movement to draw away from Keenan, who stood grotesquely petrified, his lean jaw fallen, the melancholy Celtic face touched more with wonder than with fear.

"Don't move!" commanded her husband, as he saw the motion. "Stay where you are!"

She looked at him, as bewildered as the others.

"That man, you'll find, is armed. Take his revolver from him!"

A momentary hesitation held her back.

"Take it, I say! And, by God, if he so much as moves a finger, I'll blow the top of his head off!"

The woman confronted Keenan once more, but he fell back a step or two. "There's no need of that," he broke in angrily. "If you want the gun I'll give it to you!"

And as he spoke his arm swung down and back to his hip pocket.

"Stop that!" cried Durkin sharply, as he saw the movement. "Keep those hands up, or, by heaven, I'll let you have it!"

His arm, by this time, was tense and rigidly outstretched, and his steady pistol-barrel pointed just between the other man's ludicrously blinking eyes. In the silence that followed the woman reached back, and without further hesitation drew the revolver from the motionless man's pocket.

It was a formidable, long-barreled "Colt," which, with one sharp motion of the fingers, she promptly unlimbered,

exposing the breech. In each cylinder chamber, she saw, lay a loaded cartridge. Once assured of this, she snapped shut the breech and balanced the gun in the purposeful embrace of her strong white fingers.

"Now what?" she cried triumphantly, with her eyes turned to her husband. But the triumph suddenly died out of her face.

She was only in time to hear Durkin's sharp cry of anger, and to see his quick spring through the wide doorway, as the guard-door of the elevator closed and the cage shot up into space.

"We've missed him!" he cried, with a smothered oath, as he ran to the door through which MacNutt, in that moment of excitement, had disappeared.

Mame kept her eyes on Keenan. She, too, began to feel the sense of some vast finality in their moves and actions that night.

Keenan laughed. It was a dry and joyless laugh, but it was disconcerting.

"What is on the floor above?" demanded Durkin, wheeling on him.

"The floor above," slowly responded the other, "is Richard Penfield's private offices, where his safe is, and where your friend, no doubt, is now depositing his valuables, behind a burglar-proof time-lock!"

"Oh, that's it, is it!" cried Durkin. He turned to the woman sharply.

"Mame, quick! Leave Keenan to me! MacNutt must not get out of this house! We must stop him before he gets down this shaft. You go down by the stairs, quick, to the lowest basement. You'll find the dynamo operating the elevator. What you must do is to get to the switch and shut off the power before this car can get past us! Quick!"

He still faced Keenan, but his eye followed her to the door.

"If he does come, kill him; shoot him down, I say, like a dog—or he'll kill you!"

He could hear, through those silent hallways, the muffled rustling of her skirts and the sound of her flying feet on the waxed and polished wood.

It was the unseen foe that he was afraid of, the undiscerned force that he feared. His uneasy and alert mind struggled to grasp the problem of how and where MacNutt would strike, if strike he did, out of the darkness of that silent and deserted house.

Durkin decided that above all things he must render impossible the descent of the elevator cage. But for a moment he could think of no bar that might be flung across the path of that complex and almost irresistible machinery, once awakened into its full power. Then the solution of the riddle came to him.

Still menacing the silent Keenan with his revolver, he flung over, with one quick and reckless push of his foot, the heavy mahogany table that stood in the centre of the room. This table he peremptorily ordered Keenan to push out into the elevator shaft and leave it projecting there, as a barrier to any downward movement of the cage. Every second, he knew, was precious. Even as Keenan, at the menace of his blasphemously reiterated command, threw open the guard door, Durkin was wondering, in his febrile activity of mind, just how soon MacNutt's next move would come, and just how and where he would strike.

The answer to that question came more quickly than he had expected. And it came grimly, and in a manner most unlooked for.

For even as the reluctant Keenan stooped over the heavy table, not ten feet from the shaft, the elevator cage descended. It flashed by the open door without stopping on its hurried course; but as it winged past that square of open light a revolver shot rang out and reëchoed through the room.

Durkin, peering across the curling smoke, saw Keenan pitch forward on his hands, struggle and thrash to his feet once more, like a wounded rabbit, and then fall again, prone on his face, close beside the shaft door.

Durkin, with little beads of sweat on his pallid face, realized what it meant.

That flying shot had been intended for *him*. MacNutt, in that desperate and hurried and unreasoning last chance, had delivered his blow, but had been mistaken in his man!

This knowledge flashed through his mind with the rapidity of a kinetoscope plate, and a moment later was obliterated by still another hurrying impression. For, through the deserted house rang two short and terrified screams. They were a woman's screams, and he knew they could come from no one but Mame.

He turned and hurled himself down the stairway, without even waiting to recover the revolver that had fallen a minute before from his startled fingers. He was conscious only of flinging the weight of his sliding body on the flume-like surface of the smooth balustrade, with his feet clattering on the polished steps as he went. He turned and dashed on to the head of the next stairway, and in the same manner flung himself to the floor beneath, and then to the next, and the next, until he was in the gloom of the basement itself.

Breathless and panting, he groped his way through the darkness to where a glimmer of light came from what he hurriedly took to be the engine-room.

There, as he darted through the narrow doorway, into the circle of dim light from the one tinted globe in the lowered elevator cage, a strange sight met his eyes. It shocked and flung him into a second or two of blank indecision, of volitionless and thoughtless inactivity. For one moment of ominous calm it stung and held him there before the sudden blind, cyclonic rush of brain and body which the vision gave rise to.

For at the door of the open cage MacNutt and Mame fought and struggled and panted together. The man was inside the bottom of the shaft, the woman was outside it. Her huddled but still resisting body was locked and jammed halfway across the narrow door. One of her opponent's great, ape-like, strangling arms was about her neck. But the fingers at the end of it

were caught between her strong white carnivorous teeth; and they became stained with blood as, in her frenzy, she fought and bit and struggled, with the blind fury of some final despair. Her revolver she had been unable to use, for it lay out of her reach, behind them, on the floor of the cage.

MacNutt, as he strained and tore at her resisting body, was fighting and edging his way with her back into the cage, to where that waiting revolver lay. He himself was already well within it, sprawled out red and disheveled and Titanesque on the cage floor. But she was resisting him, inch by inch, fighting desperately, like a cornered cat, for her very life, yet knowing there could be only one end to that uneven conflict.

Durkin, after one comprehending glance, followed his first animal impulse of offense and descended on MacNutt, kicking brutally at the prone, bull-like head, with its claret-colored bald spot, across which ran one livid scratch. Then his heavy boot smote against the clustered fingers of the gorilla-like hand, crushing and bruising them against the gilded iron grillwork, through which was interwoven the Penfield triple crescent.

The clutching arms relaxed, but only for a moment. In that moment, however, Durkin had stooped and with the one hand that remained with him to use struggled to tear Mame away from the deadly clutch. This he would surely have done had not MacNutt seen his chance, and with his free hand suddenly caught at the wounded wrist that hung limply at his enemy's side. That sudden, savage torture of the lacerated flesh was more than the weak and exhausted body of Durkin could endure. He emitted one little involuntary cry; then every protesting nerve and sinew capitulated, a white light seemed to flash and burn at the base of his very brain, and then go out. He fell fainting on the hard maple floor.

For a moment or two, like a defeated prize-fighter, he panted and struggled, ludicrously yet pathetically,

to rise to his feet, but the effort was futile.

It was as he found himself ebbing down through some soft and feathery emptiness that he seemed to hear a pitiful and imploring voice call thinly out, "*Mack!*" Still fainter he seemed to hear it, "*Mack! Come up! I'm dying!*" He remembered, lazily, that it sounded like the distant voice of Keenan—but where was Keenan? Then he seemed to hear the purr and murmur of distant machinery, followed by a gentle puff of sound and what he hazily dreamed was the smell of powder smoke. Then he remembered no more.

Just how or at what juncture he lost consciousness he could never clearly remember. But his first tangible impression was the knowledge that Mame was once more pouring brandy down his throat and imploring him to hurry. Then the sound of muffled blows sounded from above.

"Quick, Jim, oh, quick, or it will be too late. No, not that way. We can't go by the front—that's cut off. By the back—this way—I've got everything open!"

"But what's the noise?" asked Durkin weakly.

"That's the police, with a fireman's axe, breaking in the front door. But, see, it's not too late! These steps take us up to the back court, and this iron gate opens on a lane that runs from the supply department of the hotel there right through to the open street!"

He shambled after her, white and tottering.

"Quick, Jim, quick!" she reiterated, as she supported him through the low gate, and kept her arm in his as they passed down the dark lane, with its homely smells of early cookery and baking bread. Only one passion possessed them—the blind and persistent and unreasoning passion for escape, for freedom.

"But MacNutt—where's MacNutt?" demanded Durkin, coming to a stop.

"No—no—quick!" gasped Mame, tugging at his arm.

"I tell you I've got to have it out with that man!" protested the pitifully dazed but dogged combatant at her side.

"You can't, Jim—he's dead!"

"You—you did it?" he asked unsteadily. The face he gazed into looked aged and worn and pallid in the dim half-light of the breaking morning. A sudden great pity for her tore at his heart.

"No," she cried fiercely. "No—not me!" But she was still tugging insanely at his obdurate arm. "I tell you, Jim, you must hurry, or it will be too late!"

They were skirting three early delivery-wagons, waiting to unload at the supply door of the hotel. A boy passing in the street beyond was shrilly whistling "*Tammany.*"

"Tell me—now!" demanded Durkin.

"When you fainted MacNutt reached back for the revolver. He would have shot you, only Keenan called for him. He cried down the shaft that he was dying. He—he must have pushed the button as he fell. MacNutt was still on the floor of the cage, leaning out to take aim at us, when—when—oh, I can't tell you now!"

"You mean that the elevator cage worked automatically, and that it went up, with MacNutt still leaning out?"

"Yes!" gasped the woman brokenly; and Durkin felt the shiver of the body on which he leaned.

He was silent as they swung into the open street. His exhausted and uncoordinating brain was idly busy with some vague impression of the poignant irony of that end, of how that uncomprehending yet ineluctable power with which this man had toyed and played and sinned had, at the ultimate moment, established its authority and exacted its right.

He pulled himself up with a fluttering gasp, weak, sick, overcome, and was wordlessly grateful for the sustaining arm at his side.

For, once in the open, they were walking eastward, without a sense, momentarily, of either direction or destination.

Above the canon of the mist-hung street a thin and yellow light showed where morning was coming on, tardily, thickly. The boy whistling "Tammany" passed out of hearing.

"Thank God! oh, thank God!" Mame suddenly sobbed out, tossed and exalted on a wave of blind gratitude.

"God?" moaned the defeated and unhappy man at her side, dragging painfully on with his bruised and bitter body. "What has God to do with all this—or with us?"

She could not answer. She saw only a wide and gloomy vista of tangled crime and offense, stretching back into the past, as the tumbled and huddled waves of a sea run out to its crowding skyline.

Yet broken, frustrated and defeated,

hunted and homeless, without consolation for her Today or hope for her Tomorrow, she looked up at the slowly wakening morning with a feeling that seemed to fuse and blend into the fiercest of joy.

Then the momentary exaltation died out of her weary body. They had life—but life was not enough! A sense of something within her falling and crumbling away, a silence of dark questioning and indecision, took possession of her.

Then out of her misery she cried still again, passionately, as she clutched and clung to him, her mate for whom and with whom she was destined to be a wanderer over the face of the earth:

"There must be a God! I tell you, there *must* be a God!"



SPRING AND LOVE

By Clinton Scollard

SLOW comes the vernal goddess, yet how sure
The approaching of her footfalls!—the sweet sign
Of her near-drawing!—the more radiant line
On morn's horizon; the high note and pure
Flung from the leafless wood; the honey-lure
For the bold bee beneath the upland pine;
The sweep of hillside that begins to shine
With glints of gold and emerald garniture;

Tiny ephemeræ that dip and dart
And disappear as though on rainbow wing;
Bare boughs that into sudden beauty start
As though from long and lonely languishing—
Come, O my love, and to my yearning heart
Bring all the grace and glamour of the spring!



CONSCIOUS generosity is selfishness of the most subtle sort.

March 1906

A CASE OF SISTER ANN

By Sewell Ford

“AND Burke——”
“Yes, Ann?”

“Do not fail to tell Aunt Abbie about your not caring to go to the Holts’. You would be certain to run across some of the Pages there, perhaps Alec’s wife herself, and it would be—well, you know how you would feel about that.”

“Of course, Ann, I know.”

“And on the train—do be a little reserved; you know you are so apt to make such blundering mistakes in recognizing persons, and to become acquainted with such peculiar individuals.”

“There, there, Ann. I shall sit in solemn, solitary grandeur all the way to Boston. I shall not go to the Holts’, even if I am subpoenaed to appear there, and if I meet one of the Page family on the street I shall run the other way.”

Miss Ann Trenlay did not smile. It was seldom that she did, and never in public. As she was now in a very public place indeed—no less than the waiting-room of a great railroad terminal—she maintained her accustomed poise, one of dignified gravity. Besides, she knew her brother too well to be easily assured that he could pass two whole months away from her without committing a number of social indiscretions. He had such an ingenuous, unsuspecting nature, he was so easily influenced, his sympathies were so readily stirred by absurd pretenders; in short, there was so much of the big, grown-up boy about him that Miss Ann often marveled that she could manage him as well as she did.

Under the argent shield of the Trenlay coat-of-arms was a long Latin inscription to this effect: “An ancient name is a crown to the head and a pack to the shoulders.” While the name of Trenlay is possibly not as ancient as it might be, a large number of persons on Manhattan Island know that there have been several generations of Trenlays who have been rich and that the later ones have been noted for a very aristocratic aloofness, the kind of aloofness which can only be vainly imitated by people with a “shirt-sleeves grandfather.” Perhaps there were one or two generations that quite forgot the coat-of-arms and its cumbersome motto; but Miss Ann Trenlay expiated this neglect by being keenly conscious of both at all times, especially of the motto. That sentiment as to an ancient name she had taken as her creed.

Hence her anxiety concerning Burke. For Burke, although he had inherited the bulk of the Trenlay fortune, had very little of the Trenlay aloofness. Miss Ann could not understand it. Sometimes she suspected him of a tendency to revert. In his elder brother, Alec, this tendency had been quite distinct; but then, Alec had always seemed to be more Maxwell than Trenlay. Burke had the Trenlay chin, the Trenlay nose, everything save the Trenlay reserve. There was no stubbornness about him, however. He had been led to see the enormity of Alec’s offense—since Alec’s marriage, you know, he had never been recognized by the family—and Miss Ann was determined at all hazards to save Burke from anything of the kind.

For one thing she could be thankful; she had brought him through the more difficult stages. He was nearing thirty now, and still unmarried. But he was impressionable. Miss Ann admitted that. He had an eye for a wax-doll face, a sentimental stare, or a figure of good curves. He might pretend to a lack of interest, might even seem, to the casual observer, to exhibit a marked indifference to all feminine beauty, but Miss Ann knew better.

It had been no easy task, either, to keep Burke well insulated from objectionable influences. Somehow, though, she had done it. She had revised guest lists, canceled acceptances, and restricted her own invitations with such care that, since he had come home from abroad, four years before, he had met socially only such young women as it was entirely safe for him to meet.

Now that Miss Ann was to relinquish this watchfulness for almost an entire summer she was naturally somewhat anxious. A false step by him at this stage would be even more serious than in the case of Alec. On that occasion she had been able to appeal to her father, who had practically cut the elder son out of the will. But her dear father was no more. Burke was at the head of the Trenlay family now. He was unhampered. Should he choose, and Miss Ann shuddered at the thought, he could bring to the old Trenlay mansion—you will find a picture of it in any New York guide-book—a wife such as Alec had chosen, and she would be mistress there. Why, Mrs. Alexander Trenlay had not known what it was to have a butler until two years after she had been married and Alec had begun to make money in his stock-brokerage business! True, Aunt Abbie had written that they were very well received by the best people. It might be so. Miss Ann had her own ideas as to Boston society. Her one consoling thought was that Aunt Abbie's Back Bay house was an ivy-grown hermitage from which she seldom emerged and to which few persons went. However, Aunt Abbie did know the Holts, and the Holts knew every-

one, without doubt. It had been at the Holts' that Alec had met this Page person who was unused to butlers. So she had warned Burke. Now he must go and she must take her chances.

"There! Your train is ready," announced Miss Ann. "And you have not sent that telegram about having the carriage meet you. But you can have the porter send it from the first station, I suppose. Just ask the operator over there if you may. And do hurry, Burke."

Thus urged, Mr. Burke Trenlay went to the telegraph wicket and made the inquiry. As he came back the train announcer began filling the great rotunda with stentorian echoes intended to convey the information that the Boston Limited was about to depart. Burke quickened his pace, collided with a stout old gentleman hurrying toward the ticket window, apologized, and then made a dash toward the spot where a black-silk poppy, nodding above a tall seat-back, indicated his sister.

"It's all right; she said I might," he declared. "Now, good-bye." Bending over, he deposited a brotherly kiss at the proper distance below the black-silk poppy, and without waiting for any response, started for the gate.

Half-way there Burke came to a full stop, as suddenly as though he had run against one of the big iron roof pillars—stopped and stared in astonishment. Coming directly toward him from the gate was the exact prototype, black-silk poppy and all, of his sister Ann. For an instant he doubted his eyes. They were not wholly trustworthy eyes in an uncertain light, but Burke scorned glasses except for reading. So he stared intently at the approaching figure. And it *was* Ann.

"You've just two minutes. Good-bye, Burke," and she held up her cheek to him.

"But—why—" Fortunately he was too much bewildered to protest that he thought he had just kissed her.

"Come, you must make haste," she urged.

So once more he dabbed a kiss under

a black-silk poppy and joined the scurrying line that streamed through the half-closed gate into the great trainshed.

Not until he had found his chair, adjusted a foot-stool and recovered his breath did Burke Trenlay begin to realize what had happened. He had kissed two women, each of whom wore a black-silk poppy in her hat. One of them was his sister Ann. Yes, he was sure of that much. But who on earth was the other? Turning his chair to the window he stared blankly out, seeing nothing but question marks. Who could she be? What had she thought? What had she done? What did she mean to do about it?

Flash-like a dozen disturbing possibilities came to his mind. Was she at that moment making a tearfully indignant complaint to the station officials? Would they telegraph his description ahead; and would detectives, perhaps at New Haven, come aboard to drag him from the train? It would be a nice affair, would it not, for a Trenlay to figure in? And how would Ann take it? The very spirit of Burke Trenlay groaned at that thought.

The Limited had gotten under way and had plunged half through the tunnel before Burke roused at all from these unpleasant speculations. Then, in a helpless, dazed way, he began to look about him. The very first object on which his vision rested was a poppy, a black-silk poppy, which nodded accusingly at him from over the chair-top directly in front.

With a kind of stupefied fascination he gazed at it. Cautiously, without once taking his eyes from it, he felt for his reading-glasses and put them on. Yes, it certainly looked like a black poppy. Gaslight, though, is deceptive. It might be a dark-blue poppy or a deep purple one, or even green. If only it might not prove to be black! He would wait for a better view. As the train emerged into the sunlight, however, hope fled. It *was* a black poppy. He was discovered, cornered. There was no escape.

Just above Mott Haven there ar-

rived a new view of the situation to comfort his harrowed mind. The owner of the poppy hat had as yet made no hue and cry about having been kissed by a strange man. Having caught the Limited, she could have had no time to do so in the station. Of course there was still every opportunity. Even then she might be planning a revenge for the indignity.

Eventually she must discover him, for one cannot sit for five hours within two feet of another person without being seen. Would she recognize him, though? There was one chance in twenty, perhaps, that she would not. If she did—well, he could still hope that she might be induced to listen calmly to his explanation without making a scene.

Surely she must admit what might be called contributory negligence. Why had she worn a black poppy in her hat? Why should she choose an end seat in the waiting-room and occupy it at the exact moment when his sister should have been in the one at the other end of the row? Why— Sufficient to say that he made out for himself rather a strong case, not only proving his own innocence, but almost convicting the unknown wearer of the poppy hat of deliberately plotting to get herself kissed.

As the suburban stations whizzed by he began to wonder just how indignant she really was. She was sitting quietly enough, yet the poppy nodded just as accusingly as ever. That black-silk poppy and a saucily rolled bit of straw under it were about all he had to judge her by; little enough for one unskilled in the subtle arts of deduction.

Ordinarily Burke was an incurious man, but now there arose a compelling desire to see more of the person under the hat, just as a prisoner will crane his neck to watch the complainant at the bar. The approach of a porter diverted his attention. He must get that telegram off to Aunt Abbie. Summoning the man he sent him for a pad of blanks.

At his first words the poppy became agitated. The hat lifted a few inches

as the wearer of it straightened herself, and a hand's breadth of back hair became visible. It was not remarkable hair, belonging to none of the romantic shades, but it was very neatly done. It looked soft and fine and well-cared for. Burke, however, was more concerned with the essential fact that it had become visible.

"Ah!" he thought, "she has recognized my voice. Now for it!"

But nothing happened immediately. The porter returned with the telegraph blanks and Burke wrote his message to Aunt Abbie.

"Yes, suh; yes, suh," said the porter suavely. "Send it at Noo Haven, suh. Ah'll have to verify it, suh." And, before he could be stopped, he had read the message aloud.

It was an extremely commonplace communication, to be sure, yet to acute ears it might convey much. It told his name and the address to which he was going. Obviously neither of these details escaped the person immediately in front. One could know that just by glancing at the poppy. While the wearer of it was making no move to turn around and face him she was trying to do something else, for her head swayed first to one side, then to the other.

Ah, he understood! At the forward end of the car was a mirror. She was trying to catch a glimpse of him in that. The mirror, however, was some distance away and she was having poor success. Becoming interested in the game, Burke tried it, too. With the nodding poppy to guide him he found the task not so difficult; only it was such a vague vista of persons that his untrustworthy eyes gave him but a shadowy idea of her features. Such as it was, the glimpse was reassuring. She seemed to have rather a young and pretty face. He felt better immediately. Having kissed someone by mistake, he was not displeased to learn that he could not be accused of poor taste.

Burke Trenlay's mind was just then very keen. An inspiration came to him. Why not seize the opportunity

of establishing his defense by means of another telegram? Quickly he acted upon this impulse. The second message which the punctilious porter repeated was as follows:

MISS ANN TRENLAY,

Fifth avenue, New York City.

Did I kiss you good-bye more than once in waiting-room? Direct answer to Limited at Hartford. BURKE.

Of course, he knew what the answer would be. It would come from Ann's secretary, left in charge of her charitable work. It would state that Miss Ann had driven directly from the station to the steamer and was by this time on her way to Europe; all of which Burke knew quite well—otherwise he would not have sent the telegram. The message would reach the ears under the hat, however.

It did, too. The nodding poppy wigwagged a prompt response, but unluckily Burke was ignorant of the code. She had heard, she had understood; but what the effect had been he could not determine. The suspense was not of long duration. Before the porter could pass her chair she had reached out a detaining hand.

"Porter, will you send a message for me, too?" she asked pleasantly. The porter almost bent double in acknowledging his pleasure to be at her service. Hers was a soft, sweet voice, with such a singing vibrancy to it that even Burke, startled as he was, admitted a thrill.

Only for a brief instant, however, did the thrill endure. Did she mean to telegraph for the police! If so, he must make his argument quickly. He must dissuade her from that step at any cost. Anxiously he awaited the composition of that fateful telegram.

Now that she swung half around to the aisle, he had a fairly comprehensive view of her. He saw that she was more than simply good-looking; she was deliciously pretty, exactly the type of young woman that his sister Ann disliked so thoroughly. "Beauty is an essential—for shop-girls," was Ann's favorite aphorism. For many years no one had accused Ann of being beautiful.

No suggestion of the shop-girl comparison came to Burke as he furtively inspected, over the top of a magazine, the lady of the poppy. Aside from this detail of her hat he could not have described a single article of her attire; but its impression on him was one of exquisite daintiness and absolute fitness. Her chin was dainty, too, although it was a firm, capable little chin. Her nose—she was shamefully abusing that organ by flattening the tip of it with the end of a silver pencil. He wished he could see her eyes, which the dark lashes were hiding. He was sure they were nice eyes.

Of course, Burke Trenlay was rather impertinent in making such close scrutiny of his fellow passenger. But the case was somewhat exceptional. He had kissed her, you see, and so it was difficult to remember that she was an utter stranger. Just where had he kissed her? On the cheek, was it? No, now that he recalled the incident, he was almost positive that, as he had leaned down over the poppy hat—the first one—she had turned her head toward him, probably from a startled impulse, and that he had kissed her on the lips. They were very kissable lips, Burke noted. Again he experienced an unaccountable thrill. He even blushed a little.

Now the message was finished. She was summoning the porter.

"I wonder if it is legible?" she suggested.

"Oh, yahs, miss, 'deed it is, miss," and he proceeded to prove that it was. It read this way:

ALEXANDER V. TRENLAY,
Boston.

Burke and I are coming on the Limited; and I have something perfectly killing to tell you of him.

TEEDIE.

Quite demurely she listened to the reading of it, handed the porter a dollar bill and, as the man left, calmly lifted a pair of big, mischievous brown eyes to Burke.

"Oh, I say, you're not going to tell Alec, are you?" The protest popped out like a cork from a wine-bottle.

He hardly knew that he had opened his lips until it had been uttered. "I . . . I mean, you know . . . that is, I beg your pardon; but it was all a stupid mistake—your wearing a poppy in your hat, just like Ann's, you see, and I was in a hurry, and . . . and . . . really, I'm awfully sorry. I didn't mean to do it."

Quietly she listened to his disjointed phrases of explanation, and then, when he had finished, smiled quizzically at him.

"Yes, I knew that you didn't. I saw that it was a mistake almost as soon as—as you had made it."

"Did you, though? Thank goodness for that!" There was a world of relief in his tone. "I feared, you know, that you might misunderstand and be indignant and make a lot of trouble. And I'm sure it's awfully nice of you to be so sensible about it. I am such a blundering idiot that——"

"Please don't," she interrupted. "It wasn't such a dreadful thing for you to do, after all. I didn't mind it in the least. I am Teedie, you know."

"Oh! Are you?"

"Yes."

"You—you are—Teedie?" There was such a dazed, helpless look in his eyes as he made this singularly unilluminating observation that she bowed her head and pretended to be interested in screwing the silver pencil back into its handle.

As for Burke, he continued to gaze at her, speechless. So she was Teedie? She had said so. But who in blazes *was* Teedie? Evidently he was expected to know. There was that assumption in her tone and manner. Also he was expected to respond appropriately. He must do it at once. Rapidly, desperately he reviewed the situation. This charming young person of the black poppy had assured him that she really did not mind his having kissed her by mistake because, as a matter of fact, she was Teedie. Obviously her being Teedie made a difference. But how? He could recall no one by the name of Teedie whom he might with propriety kiss in

public. More than that, he had never heard of *any* Teedie before. Such a one there seemed to be, however, and she was before him in person.

He could not help wishing that he had been previously made aware of this. Possibly he might have exercised sooner this newly discovered privilege. At any rate, he was glad that it existed. The future held possibilities. If only he could bridge over the perplexing present! But he must. It was imperative that he should assume to know just who Teedie was, even though he had not the faintest notion.

"Ah," he said, preparing for a plunge, "I never should have guessed that you were Teedie; honestly, I shouldn't."

"No? And why not?"

There he was, in deeper water than ever.

"Why . . . er . . . your eyes, you know."

"Oh!" and the dark lashes dropped demurely. "But everyone seems to think that we have eyes very much alike."

Burke rolled the magazine very tightly in his big hands at this. We? Who could she mean by that "we"? Possibly she referred to a brother. He caught at the straw.

"Doubtless they are similar, but yours are of such a bright, lively shade of brown, while his——"

"You mean hers."

"Hers, of course. I have always thought of hers as——"

"But you have never seen my sister," she objected wonderingly.

Burke gazed at her open-mouthed. Fathoms and fathoms below him was the bottom, if bottom there was. No, the reason he failed to recognize Teedie was not because her eyes were unlike those of a brother who probably did not exist, nor of her sister, whom he had never seen. Perhaps he should have said mother or aunt or cousin? But he would hazard no more wild guesses. Even at the risk of offending Teedie he must get to the solid ground of comprehension.

"You are right," he admitted; "I

have not seen your sister. Will you please tell me who she is?"

"Aha! Why didn't you ask that in the first place?" and she shook the pencil playfully at him. "Well, I will tell you—she is Mrs. Alec Trenlay."

"Alec's wife!" Burke half-whispered the ejaculation, as though fearful that it might reach the ears of his sister Ann. Precisely what it was that Ann had found so objectionable in Alec's wife, Burke had never clearly understood. He had heard that she was a Western girl and offensively beautiful. Now that he reflected, he knew that these two items were quite sufficient for Ann. "Then you—you are——"

"Yes, I am your dreadful sister-in-law, Theresa Page, known to the family as Teedie. And I want to say to you right here, Mr. Burke, I am not the least little bit afraid of you, even if you are the head of the Trenlays."

"Gracious! I should hope that you wouldn't be afraid of me. Do I look savage?"

"Not so much so as you should. But even if you did, even though you should growl at me, I should tell you just what I thought of you. I have often wanted to, and this appears to be a grand opportunity, so I'm going to do it now."

While her tone was not menacing, there was a businesslike tilt to her capable little chin as she swung her chair independently about to face the window. Meekly Burke followed, and, turning his back to the aisle, prepared to listen to whatever reproof the charming Teedie had in store for him.

"You don't approve of me?" he suggested.

"No, I do not," said Teedie promptly. "You are too meddlesome, for one thing."

"Meddlesome!" gasped Burke.

"That is my name for it; I suppose you call it something else. But what difference does it make to you, I would like to know, whether or not I appear in private theatricals, or travel alone sometimes, or visit the Brewsters, or drive a tandem at a country horse

show? And yet, when I wish to do any of these things I am told, 'You mustn't, Teedie; Burke wouldn't like it.' It has been 'Burke wouldn't like this,' and 'Burke wouldn't like that,' ever since your brother married my sister, and I am tired of hearing it. There! I said I would tell you if ever I saw you, and I have." Whereupon the black poppy on Teedie's hat nodded frantic approval.

"But—but who said I wouldn't like it, and how did they know?"

"Why, my sister said so, and I suppose Alec told her. The very first time I went to visit them they led me up to a big oil painting they have of you and said, very solemnly and impressively, 'This is Burke. He has all the Trenlay fortune. He is the head of the family. You must not do anything that would displease him.' And I was awed. But I didn't stay awed. I am twenty-three now, and I mean to do just as I choose."

Thomas Jefferson, when he finished the Declaration of Independence, could not have shaken his head with a more undaunted air. Burke Trenlay looked at his defiant sister-in-law with amused admiration.

"My dear Teedie," he said earnestly, "I am glad to hear it, for I want you to believe that whatever you choose to do I shall endorse. If anyone ever tells you again that Burke wouldn't like it, just you tell them that you know better, that he said he particularly wished you to do that very thing. So there!" and Burke tossed back his head—a big, well-shaped head and laughed heartily.

Teedie seemed a trifle bewildered at this. "Really! Do you mean that?"

"Every word. There's my hand on it."

She looked hesitatingly at the broad palm held out to her and then slowly shook her head.

"That isn't all," said Teedie. "There's Alec, you know. Alec is one of the finest fellows in the world, even if you don't think so."

"But I do. Alec is my big brother. I think he's a splendid chap, and I

have always thought so. I don't allow anyone to say anything ill of Alec to me, not even Ann."

"Then why——"

"The will?" he anticipated. "I was somewhere in Syria when that happened. I have always felt very badly about that, as Alec will tell you. But father, you know, and Ann, thought differently. Good old Alec! You don't know how much I have missed seeing him," and Burke Trenlay gazed out at the hurrying landscape.

There was tenderness in his gaze, and sincerity. Teedie saw both. Then she, too, turned and stared unseeing out of the car window. The Limited was rushing madly into the very heart of the pie-breakfast belt. The black-silk poppy in Teedie's hat was quivering with gentle expectancy.

"Alec thinks such a lot of you, too," she said at length.

"Does he?" said Burke eagerly. "Tell me about him, how he is getting along, and all that."

There is nothing like a congenial topic for the rapid ripening of acquaintanceship. As they sped Bostonward they definitely settled it between them that Alec was a very excellent fellow indeed.

"It's too bad," said Teedie, a little quaver of sympathy in her tone, "that you can't go to see him."

Abruptly Burke shot a glance of inquiry at her. Never before had the situation been framed so clearly for him. He could not go to see Alec? Why not, pray? Then there arose before him a vision of Ann, and he bowed his head submissively.

Yes, it was true. He had accepted as his own his sister's attitude toward Alec and Alec's wife. The habit of years had prevailed, for, ever since he and Alec had been motherless small boys Ann had been the domestic dictator. Alec's breaking away had seemed daring, revolutionary. For himself, Burke had always been highly content to be relieved of certain social responsibilities. Seldom had he chafed under Ann's severe rule. But now it was different. He felt that somehow

his sister had been wretchedly unjust to Alec. He wished that the breach might be bridged. But how could it be done?

Lifting a worried, uncertain look he found Teedie watching him. Before her long lashes could hide it he had caught a gleam of mischief in her brown eyes. Instantly a new understanding was awakened within him. How much nicer it would be if the person who was mistress in the old Trenlay mansion—the one whose picture you will find in all the guide-books—could be—well, someone like Miss Teedie Page, for instance.

The newly developed understanding became a revelation. Again he glanced at Teedie, this time with that bashful shyness whose meaning is always so patent to feminine eyes. Seeing that look, Teedie fixed her attention on the silver pencil with seeming indifference to him. But the black poppy on Teedie's hat was above such small deceptions. It was bobbing beckoningly.

"How long shall you be at Alec's?" asked Burke irrelevantly.

"For the summer, I expect," and Teedie's tone indicated that it really did not matter.

"Do you suppose," ventured Burke hesitatingly, "that Alec would let me come to see him at this late day?"

"Oh, I dare say that he would be just silly enough to welcome you with open arms."

"H-m-m!" said Burke reflectively, regarding her with puzzled interest.

He was still wondering at this new mood of his perplexing sister-in-law

when the engine shrieked warningly and the Limited slowed down for the Hartford stop. Two minutes later the porter appeared with a telegram for Burke. It read thus:

Carriage wheel smashed. Not hurt, but missed steamer. Do not understand your message. Will join you at Aunt Abbie's tonight.
ANN.

With a grim smile he handed it over to Teedie. As she read it through her brown eyes glowed with appreciation.

"You thought she would never get it?"

He nodded a gloomy assent.

"And now?" suggested Teedie.

Burke made a wry face. "Now it remains for me to explain to Ann who it was that I kissed by mistake."

Teedie's graceful shoulders shrugged with wicked delight.

"You can tell her how badly you felt when you found what you had done, you know."

"No, I . . . I couldn't say that. I . . . you see, I don't feel badly at all. I hope you don't mind my saying it, Teedie, but I'm awfully glad I did make a mistake." Whereupon Burke blushed.

"Oh!" Teedie's brown eyes demurely sought her lap. "Then perhaps you will tell *that* to your sister Ann when you see her tonight?"

"I do not expect," and there was heroic determination in Burke's tone, "to see Ann tonight. And when I do see her I hope to have something more definite than that to tell her. It all depends upon Alec—and you."



A TOWN WE ALL KNOW

BILLVILLE is a lively little town lying just on the other side of the first of the month. It is made up in part of old buildings, some of them having been standing for some time, and many new ones varying in size. It is peopled by handsome figures, some of them a good deal broader than they are long. Those who put up here over night are likely to stay here all the rest of their lives. After that, the only way to leave it is to go over the river.

MERELY PLAYERS

By Mrs. Poultney Bigelow

“ISN'T your taste just a trifle——?”

A ring of cigarette smoke issued from Mrs. Lintern's mouth, instead of the expected adjective.

“Low?” supplied Lady Ware unabashed.

“I didn't say it,” said her friend.

“But you meant it,” said Peggy Ware, still good-humored.

“Not in the way of criticism, believe me. Some of the best women have been fascinated by mountebanks. Lady Castlemaine, for instance, by Jacob Hall, the rope-dancer.”

Lady Ware laughed unrestrainedly.

“The *best* women!” she rippled.

“Well,” said Agnes Lintern, “I mean by that the most highly placed.”

“And to love a rope-dancer one must aim high,” observed Peggy.

“Oh, how obvious!”

Agnes Lintern frankly yawned and stretched herself, nearly upsetting the tea-table beside her arm-chair.

Lady Ware was silent for a minute or two; then she said, almost eagerly:

“You don't understand in what way Peter Bowles interests me: it's his youth, his elasticity—his gestures—the brightness of his eyes—but more—it's his great cleverness and his absolute lack of vulgarity. There is intellect—fine, delicate intuition—behind that comic impersonation of his. That young man will go far; he has the divine spark.”

Mrs. Lintern clapped her hands.

“Brava, Peg! A masterly criticism! What a lot you discovered in a twenty minutes' 'turn'!”

“You may laugh—it is curious to feel such an interest in a Yankee music-

hall artist—but I really want to speak to that boy—to hear how he began—what he wants to be.”

“Hamlet, I expect. Why don't you ask him to tea?”

Peggy Ware looked serious.

“Why, so I might!” she exclaimed.

“Why, certainly!” returned Agnes, mimicking Peggy's slight and charming American accent.

“And so I will,” supplemented Peggy.

“Yet you won't receive my friend Fortescue Orme!” said Mrs. Lintern.

“His very picture makes me sick!” said Peggy. “The fear of seeing his long nose and soulful eyes and doughy cheeks on post-cards keeps me away from shop windows. *That* man is vulgar, if you like—vulgar and small and common—deep down. Peter's a king compared to him.”

“If you could inoculate the matinee girls with your views, poor Fortescue would be saved many weary pen-scrapings. Nobody wants your 'knock-about's' autograph, I'm sure! I doubt if he can write legibly.”

“I shall know—if he answers by note.”

“He is so common that he may think it necessary to answer letters. A real star never does.”

“Some stars have that rudeness as their only mark of stardom.”

“Why do you hate Fortescue Orme?”

“He belongs to a class which is peculiarly disgusting—to me. Partly owing to women—who are fools, you know!—and partly to the important position of the stage nowadays, hand-some actors without mental ballast

appear in a ridiculous light. A girl asked the other day in 'Home Scraps' what Orme's favorite scent and color are. Fancy!"

"What did the 'editress' say?"

"Said she didn't know. I should have said—the smell of the incense burned at his shrine, and the color of the matinee girl's cheek toward the third act."

"I should have said the color of a sovereign! Orme's awfully keen on money."

Mrs. Lintern spoke no more for some time. Lady Ware sat at her writing-table, absently handling a penholder. Both women were suddenly and simultaneously struck by an idea.

Agnes jumped up from her chair—Peggy wheeled around in hers; the friends confronted each other.

"I have it!" "Here's an idea!" The two exclamations occurred at the same moment.

"I'll speak first! I'm the oldest!" said Agnes. "Let's have a wager. You write to Peter Bowles, and I'll write to Fortescue Orme—and we'll see *who* answers. We'll test the comparative vanity of the 'knock-about' and the *jeune premier*."

"Good!" cried Peggy. "Delightful!"

"Give me writing things," said Agnes. "Quick! I'll clear a space on the table; we'll both write."

For a quarter of an hour there was silence—except for the sound of pens traveling rapidly. Then there was a cessation—then another gallop over the paper. At last Peggy said, "Listen!" and proceeded to read:

'DEAR MR. BOWLES:

"I trust you will forgive a perfect stranger for writing to you. A few nights ago I had the great pleasure of witnessing your remarkable performance, which moved me to tears and laughter. Will you come to tea one afternoon, and let me thank you for the pleasure you have given me? I should much like to hear about your work before you came to London.

"Yours sincerely,

"PEGGY WARE."

"Will that do?"

"Excellent," said Agnes. "Rather

stodgy and respectable—but it will do. Now:

"DEAR MR. ORME:

"It will be nothing new to you to receive a few lines of appreciation from a stranger; I fear you were long ago weary of admiration. But you must forgive me. Last night I saw you for the first time in 'The Knight of the Silver Star.' I dare not say what I thought—even on paper, I dare not say it. I could tell you, perhaps, what your impersonation meant to me. Might one not, for once, overleap the barriers of convention? Will you allow me to take your hand and express my gratitude to the man whose genius has opened up a whole world of hitherto unknown emotions?

"I shall be walking in Sloane street on Thursday next—at the Square end—which is less frequented. I shall wear a large bunch of pink roses, and an ermine toque. Will you be there?

"AGNES."

Peggy Ware sighed ecstatically.

"A masterpiece!" she said. "Mine is feeble by comparison?"

"I meant mine to be very alluring—I hope it is. If Fortescue responds he is vulgar—and hopeless. I give in. I shall drive up and down in the brougham on Thursday, well sunk down so as to be unrecognizable—and if he's there, I'll come straight to you. By that time your Bowles may have answered."

"Very well," said Peggy.

Then the two naughty ladies kissed and parted—gurgling with innocent joy.

The month was December, and the dusk fell early. London wore a dreary aspect at three o'clock on the eventful Thursday.

Agnes Lintern, sunk in sables, drove slowly up and down Sloane street, lingering—by special order to the coachman—at the Sloane Square end.

There was the usual shopping contingent hurrying along over the greasy pavements, but the street was not in the least crowded, as it is in the season.

Agnes half repented of her hoax, as she gently passed up and down. If Fortescue Orme was really a fool she felt she would be sorry. She had no regard for him beyond the tepid liking which a happily married woman may

feel for an agreeable man who is the fashion. He, at all events, should never learn who "Agnes" was.

It was a quarter past three, and she had almost decided to drive to Lady Ware's, when she saw a tall figure advancing from the Knightsbridge end of the street. It wore a top-coat with a sable collar—the day was cold—and a particular shiny hat, and it carried a very smart stick. It had a large pink rose in its buttonhole.

There was no mistaking the "long nose, soulful eyes and doughy cheeks" of Peggy's unkind description. Mr. Fortescue Orme, the "Knight of the Silver Star," was taking a walk, and incidentally searching for something.

Agnes allowed herself the luxury of

one more turn, trusting to the gathering dusk to preserve the incognito of her well-known brougham.

Then she drove to Peggy's, leaving the Knight still searching.

Lady Ware received her with joy, and heard her experience with rapture.

Without a word she placed in Agnes's hand a letter written in a neat, round hand.

DEAR MADAM:

You are very kind to write to me. I am glad my performance interested you. At present I am so busy that I cannot make calls; but my wife, who is staying at No. — Maida Vale, will be delighted to see you some afternoon. She is a very interesting woman; I am sure you would like her.

Truly yours,

PETER BOWLES.



IN YOUR LITTLE HOUSE

By Richard Kirk

IN your little house with the green-thatched roof—
 With the green-thatched roof and the narrow door—
 The narrow door of your little house,
 And never a footprint on the floor,
 Do you hear the rain and the wind in the trees,
 As you lie there tonight at your lonely ease?

In your little house with the green-thatched roof—
 With the green-thatched roof and its walls dew-damp—
 With its dew-damp walls, and never a shadow
 From flickering firelight or lamp,
 Do you hear the rain and listen again,
 And say, "'Tis only the rain I hear, the rain"?

In your little house with the green-thatched roof—
 With the green-thatched roof and its deep content—
 With its deep content (please God it be so,
 That peace went with you when it went!)—
 Do you know that I stand here without your door,
 Craving a bed on your sanded floor?

WARD VS. WARD

By William R. Lighton

THE court bailiff was keeping a jealously watchful eye upon the clock. On the stroke of ten he stood at his official post, erect, alert, his official gavel poised, his glance shifting from the clock dial to the massive closed door of the judge's chambers, awaiting the signal that would set the machinery of Justice in motion. After a moment the door swung slightly ajar, and on the instant the gavel fell sharply.

"Gentlemen!" pronounced the bailiff; "His Honor, Judge Wright!"

The buzz of talk and laughter at the bar trailed off into silence and the assembled lawyers got to their feet, standing in attitudes of perfunctory respect until the judge had passed with dignified, slow step to his place and turned to face them.

"Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye!" chanted the bailiff. "The honorable the Circuit Court in and for the County of Mason is now in session." Then judge and lawyers settled into their seats.

Judge Wright opened his ponderous case docket, glancing briefly over the clerk's entries for the morning.

"There are some equity matters remaining to be disposed of, before the close of the term," he said, with no loss of time. "The first on today's call is Ward against Ward. An action for divorce. Are the parties ready to proceed?"

An eager young lawyer arose. "I appear for Mrs. Ward, your honor—for the plaintiff. We're ready for trial. Mrs. Ward is waiting within a moment's call."

Judge Wright bent his head in grave acknowledgment; then his eyes sought

out one of the seasoned veterans of the bar. "Judge Westlake?" he prompted. "The docket shows your name as counsel for the defendant."

The veteran stood lounging negligently against the bar table, his wrinkled old hand plucking at his grizzled beard.

"Yes, I—suppose so," he said slowly. "I'm Dick Ward's friend, rather than his lawyer. This case—I may as well say I've been hoping it wouldn't have to come to trial. I think it might have been managed somehow, except for—I mean no offense—except for the youthful ardor of the plaintiff's counsel to get a woman's wrongs judicially redressed. That counted pretty heavily against our efforts toward an understanding. I've filed an answer on behalf of the husband; just a general denial of the wife's charges, so that his interests might be protected in emergency. But, really, I'd like to have a little further delay, in the interest of—the parties' future peace and happiness. I still think——"

The eager young lawyer was upon his feet, flushing hotly. "I resent the charge of undue ardor on my part," he said stoutly, "and I protest against any delay. The plaintiff's evidence will show that a reconciliation is impossible—that she is in justice entitled to a decree of divorce. We are ready for trial."

Westlake smiled grimly. "All right," he assented, with a gesture of deprecation. "Let it go at that; have it so if you must. The boy's at his office; I'll get him by telephone and have him here at once."

Judge Wright reclined at ease in his swivel chair, waiting, swinging about to face an open south window, letting his glance wander from the somber, time-worn furnishings of the courtroom to the fresh beauty of the summer morning out of doors. Seen thus, with his mind for the moment off its guard, his was a striking personality. Robust vigor was in every line of his big, muscular figure and strong-featured face. From the calm power of restraint shown in his firm lips and chin and in his steady gray eyes it would have been easy to argue the ripening effects of middle-life; but a closer scrutiny must have proved beyond a doubt that his maturity lay in his trained and disciplined intellect, while his body was still instinct with healthy youth—youth of that mighty sort which is defiant of years and which will not always be kept subject to curb and rein. On this morning, as he sat relaxed, gazing out upon the perfect day, his every fiber seemed responsive to its lure. He would have given much for respite from these lingering fag-ends of term-duty.

But a stir in the courtroom made him aware that duty was still impending, and he turned again to his desk, weary and uninterested. Divorce suits were his particular loathing, with their sordid, petty atmosphere of scandal, or folly, or disillusionment.

Judge Westlake had resumed his place at the bar table, and with him sat the defendant in the case. He was a handsome, clean-featured fellow, of a type that easily inspires liking; a man of right impulses and ready courage in the affairs of life; but now, as he met the curious, half-cynical gaze of the courtroom loungers, a nervous tension was upon him, a feverish restlessness. Judge Wright's glance measured him with a sure appraisal. "The man loves the woman, whoever and whatever she is," was his quick first judgment; and then, with an unaccustomed sense of concern, he glanced from the husband to the wife, who was entering from an ante-chamber, attended by her zealous ad-

vocate and counselor. She was simply gowned and heavily veiled; yet there was about her an elusive hint of rare grace and charm—the indefinable but exquisite air of perfectly poised womanhood. Involuntarily Wright hoped that she would prove out of the ordinary, to satisfy his sub-professional liking for a human "story" and to lift the case above the commonplace level of its class. He kept his gaze upon her as she moved to her place and took her seat with quiet composure, her veil still lowered, her small gloved hand lying calmly folded in her lap. He breathed a stifled sigh, half eager anticipation and half profound compassion. "The boy loves her—and she's worth it," was his thought.

With a sense of effort he dismissed this unjudicial feeling, and became again the judge, impassive, impersonal. "The court is ready to proceed," he hinted gravely.

The young attorney arose. "May it please your honor," he began, self-consciously oratorical, "my client sues for a decree of divorce upon the grounds of cruelty; and the charge will be amply proved. The evidence, I frankly admit, will disclose nothing of sheer brutality; but it will reveal what is infinitely worse to the sensibilities of a gentlewoman—a clever, almost delicate, refinement of cruelty. There are times when a blow would be more kind than——"

Judge Wright interrupted with calm decorum. "Perhaps we may save time if we will bear in mind that this trial is to the court, and not to a jury. I have just now read over the charges in the petition. Suppose we go directly to the evidence."

The youth yielded stiffly. "Very well. My case will rest only upon the testimony of the wife. Mrs. Ward will take the stand."

She arose and moved slowly forward, with the same manner of inviolable composure, until she stood close before the massive raised desk; then, with quick, deft movement, she threw back her veil, raising her hand for the oath, letting her eyes meet those of the

judge, inclining her head ever so slightly.

His breath was sharply, suddenly indrawn between his set teeth; he felt his heart leap, felt the flush of his rising blood on cheeks and temples and knew in a flash that this case was to grip his attention more firmly than he had dared dream. A startled word of recognition rose to his lips, but with a painful effort he choked it back. Vaguely, half-affrighted, he wondered whether the onlookers had seen his agitation. Perhaps not; for his trained will had instantly asserted itself, and through the tumult of his thoughts he heard his own voice, sounding far off and strange, evenly reciting the formula of the oath. She gave low-voiced assent to the obligation, then took her seat upon the witness stand beside the desk, and in a moment he heard the murmur of her responses to the first formal questions of her lawyer. From that moment until the last his eager eyes did not leave her face.

A glorious face, a wonderful face, revealed to him thus in clear profile; its beauty infinitely more than that of faultless line and perfect coloring. The full, scarlet lips and the great, dusky, heavy-lidded eyes would have been almost sensual but for the delicate modeling and the clear pallor of her cheeks and chin and throat. An immeasurable capacity for feeling was disclosed to his rapt, intent scrutiny; capacity that could scale far heights or sound fathomless depths, according to any passionate impulse; but with this an utter incapacity for life's every-day routine of half-joys and inconsequent trifles.

It was a story of merest trifles that she rehearsed now, under the adroit leadership of her advocate; the story of her six married years; a weary round of little acts, turned aslant or wrong end to, morbidly dwelt upon and painfully built up into grim barriers, although upon another interpretation they might easily have been made to appear as the blindly miscalculated devotions of a lover who reposed too much in his own faulty

understanding of woman's vagaries. Wright was familiar almost to disgust with this sort of comedy—for comedy it was to his view, though it had in it all the elements of potential tragedy. Again and again and again he had sat in such judgment upon such affairs, doing his human best to find a middle ground of sympathetic understanding between the fond but blundering husband and the self-centred, supersensitive wife. As he listened to this fresh repetition of the old grievance he knew that this woman regarded her recitals as terrible realities, though to his aloof view they appeared as merely distorted, disordered fancies.

The story took a long hour in the telling. The veteran Westlake let it take its course, with no syllable of interruption. At the last he turned for a whispered word with the husband, who sat with head bent, in profound dejection of mood. The young man nodded briefly, without a word.

"That's all, if the court please," Westlake said. "The defendant will offer no testimony. But before any further step is taken beyond retracing in the case—before a decree is entered, I want to repeat my request for a little delay. A few days' waiting can do no harm, and—well, I may as well say it outright. God knows this is a time for talking straight. I've lived a long time, and I've seen a lot of these differences and difficulties. The world-old trouble is that when a woman discovers that she's suffering unhappiness or discontent, forthwith she's got to find somebody else to blame it upon; and curiously enough she's usually better pleased if that somebody is her husband—if she has one. I don't pretend to say why, but that seems somehow to satisfy her sense of eternal fitness. I've never yet known the woman who could face the facts justly and take her full share of responsibility for these distresses. We needn't call it a weakness. Say it's a sex trait, or an outgrowth of wrong theories of chivalry—whatever you like. I'm convinced that that's true in this case. But that doesn't make the case hope-

less or justify legal violence. The court has the wife's story; now I'd like it if your honor would simply take the matter under advisement until the parties can think it over again and get their bearings."

Wright glanced curiously at the woman, who had returned to her own chair at her counsel's side. She sat with her supple body inclined toward him, her deep, eloquent eyes shining full into his; and he saw that her parted lips formed an inaudible "Yes." Baffled of understanding, he turned to his docket.

"The court will reserve decision for the present," he said with even calm. "The parties will have notice when a decree is to be entered."

When the day's work was over, Wright hurried to his apartments. The crowding details of the matters before him had oppressed and wearied him beyond measure; at the last they had become a mere meaningless jumble. Somehow he had contrived to preserve an outward manner of calm poise; and homeward bound over the familiar streets he kept to this aspect by sheer stubborn strength of will, exchanging greetings with his friends, his quiet courtesy unfailing. But his heart was not in it. Once in his rooms and safe from oversight, he put aside this brave assumption with a sigh as of relief from pain. His face was no longer the careful mask worn in the public places; within the space of a dozen heart beats he seemed to have grown older by as many years, his lips a compressed, colorless line, his square shoulders stooping, his eyes heavy and somber.

For a long hour he paced back and forth, back and forth in his rooms, compelling his step to an even measure though his emotions were in a riot. Before him, drifting lightly through the gathering shadows of the dusk, was the ethereal image of a woman's face, the vivid lips wearing an expression of sweet gravity, the wonderful dark eyes fixed steadfastly upon his. He was making no effort

to think clearly; he could do no more than keep the exquisite presentment before him, brooding upon it—brooding, brooding, until a stifled cry was wrung from him.

"Stella, Stella! *You!* Oh, is it possible!"

His man presently entered the dressing-room adjoining, turned on the electric lights and began to lay out Wright's evening clothes; but Wright stopped him.

"Was I to dine out tonight, Henderson? Oh, yes, I remember—at the Hamiltons'. Never mind; I'm not fit; I'll send a message. I want no dinner; nothing but a roll and coffee here, and then I don't want to be disturbed."

But the first fragment of his roll choked him and he put it by, reclining wearily in his deep chair, letting his coffee grow cold, his moody meditations possessing him entirely. By and bye, slowly, with a sort of unwilling deliberation, he walked to a paneled cabinet in a corner, opened it and drew from its hiding-place a packet, securely tied and sealed. Bearing this, he returned to his chair, breaking the seals and patiently untying the knotted cords. Within the wrappings lay a photograph and a score of letters.

The pictured face was the same that had been haunting him throughout the day—the same, yet with a subtle, almost intangible difference. There was a dainty girlishness in the portrait, beautiful to look upon, yet vaguely tempered in expression by a will-o'-the-wisp hint of imminent maturity, like the scent of an unopened flower bud or the blush of an unmellowed peach. It was the unfathomable dark eyes that caught and held attention. The light that shone from their depths was not that of shy, half-reluctant maidenhood, timid in its first approach to life and love; rather was it that of an untaught, passionate soul taking its first eager, almost daring look upon the splendors of the future unfolding and passionately welcoming what it saw. Rare as that beauty was, the living face of today, unchanged in line and feature, held a charm the picture

lacked. The frank ecstasy of first womanhood, the fine capacity for generous abandon of emotion were not gone, but softened, deepened, indescribably intensified by contacts with the realities.

Slowly Wright let the photograph slip from his clasp and fall at his feet.

"God!" he breathed. "I thought I had lived it down!" Then, with forced quiet, he opened the first of the letters. As his eyes fell upon the opening words his every fiber sprang tense with a spasm of pain.

"Beloved," it began, and the word was repeated over and again a score of times. "Beloved, beloved! What need I write more than that? That is the beginning and the end. *End?* No, that is a blasphemous word; there is to be no end to this love and joy of ours. When every other light of Creation has faded out, our love will be shining on, inextinguishable, a flame of eternal hope in the darkness." Thus it ran, from first to last, an unrestrained revelation, a surrender of heart and mind and soul to the very uttermost; for so she must give if she gave at all. That was the spirit which ran through all her letters; yet, though disclosure was so wholly unreserved, each succeeding line bore new and vital treasure, as if it came from a nature whose emotional riches were inexhaustible.

The last began like the first; nor was there any least effort at repression in word or phrase. Nothing was carefully calculated, nothing held back, nothing put in for form's sake. Every syllable was splendidly alive; it could not have been otherwise, coming from her.

Beloved, beloved! Yes, so you are to me, truly, in spite of what waits to be said. Oh, believe it!

You must let me go. There, the worst is past; absolutely past, beyond recall. It is no whim, no caprice, no idle humor, that moves me to this seeming cruelty; surely you know me too well to think that. Neither am I heartless; of that you will not need to be convinced. It is because this heart of mine will not submit to taming and training that I ask release from my promise

to be your wife. We cannot walk abreast, you and I, toward happiness.

You will want to know why I ask this; and that is your right. I shall tell you as well as I am able, and then you must not try to persuade me that I am wrong. If you would, no doubt you could overpower and subdue me with reason, so that I would yield; for you are so much stronger than I in that way. But I want you to be as generous as you are strong.

To say it at once, I am afraid of you; and it is your great strength that makes me afraid. For a long time I have felt it—that imperious will of yours which has given you mastery over your every frailty and which would make you master of mine, too. That would be unbearable, maddening, killing.

Were I your wife, the time would come when that stern, implacable god in you would sit in judgment upon me—and find me only human. For so I am, and so I want to be and must be. My joys must be warm, human joys, not those of far, cold heights. My chiefest passion will ever be to taste and feel and know life to the uttermost; and yours—renunciation. By and bye the best that I could give, you would put aside—not, perhaps, because you did not want it, but just for the tranquil pleasure of abnegation. You are almost superhuman; and so between us there would be a great gulf fixed. Our ways toward happiness are as North and South. That means that one of us would have to surrender. But you could not and I would not.

Yes, you must let me free while I can still say, as I do with all my heart and soul, I love you.

STELLA.

Twice, thrice he read this message through; then sat staring straight before him, seeing nothing, heeding nothing, until he became aware that his man had entered and was standing at his side, bearing a card upon a tray.

"A lady, sir, who says she must see you. I told her you were not to be disturbed, but she asked me to bring her card."

Wright took the dainty square mechanically. "Mrs. Richard Ward," he read in the engraved script, and a penciled line beneath: "Please let me come in, if only for a minute. It is imperative."

"Very well," he assented quietly, wanting the volition to resist. "You may show her in here, Henderson."

He swept the letters together and crushed them into his pocket, then

stood beside his chair, shaking, struggling for control, waiting in an agony of apprehension for what was to come.

She entered and came straight to confront him, transcendently beautiful, her great eyes searching his. By a supreme effort he met the look without a tremor. It seemed an eternity before she broke the tense silence.

"I knew you would not deny me," she said softly. "I had to come."

"I shall be glad if I can serve you," he returned, steeling himself to steadiness. A wave of crimson swept her throat and cheeks and brow at his measured words, and her lips grew tremulous as though he had given her a wanton hurt.

"I had to come," she repeated faintly. "I had to speak to you about—today."

"About the case?" he questioned. "But surely you know the impropriety of that, while the matter is still pending before me as a judge."

She bent her head in extreme agitation. "Oh!" she breathed. "Need you have said that? Is it so great a breach that I should come to you—as a friend? Are you resolved to be nothing but the judge—a mere creature of that dreadful law? For a moment today I dared to think you had not wholly forgotten that you were once—my—friend."

His strong hands were clenched until the nails bit into the flesh. The sharp pain was a grateful relief. "Forgotten? No! But tell me: Did you know that the case was to come to a hearing before me?"

She made no demur to the question. "Yes, I knew it. It was no cunning plan; but when I knew you were to hear it, and not one of the other judges, I was glad, for I thought you would understand." A sudden impetuous courage flashed upon her. "You *must* understand. You didn't today; I could see that. There were times when you were almost amused. It was all so horrible—the gaping faces hungry for palatable morsels, the formal questions and answers and the petty, cold, dead facts that meant

absolutely nothing in themselves. It made me sick with shame to know what you were thinking—that with only those shreds of fact and circumstance I was willing—I—to make public suit for the poor privilege of being one of those nameless creatures, a divorced woman. You thought it grotesque; in your heart you almost looked askance at me—at *me!* But am I to blame because your hideous law provides no other way? My life had become so much of a travesty upon honest living that I was ready to take any way of escape rather than prolong the ignominy of it. You were surprised this morning when you saw that I was willing to yield to Judge Westlake's request for delay. I did it that I might come to you, as I have come now." She came a step nearer, flinging out her arms in an abandon of feeling. "Listen! I must make you see the truth. My husband——"

But he stopped her with uplifted hand. "No; wait! It can do no good to speak to me of him in that way now. We must be just; we must remember that I am concerned with the case now only as an officer of the law—a piece of human mechanism. We must let it be so."

She drew back, shuddering under a quick revulsion of emotion. "You are so cruelly cold!" she breathed.

Then suddenly she saw the photograph, that lay forgotten where it had fallen upon the rug. With a little cry she stooped and caught it up, holding it outstretched in her trembling hand, her deep eyes aflame.

"Oh, oh! Then you—you——?"

The blood leaped to his face; but he did not try to belittle the fact. "Yes," he said simply; "I had kept it, and I have been looking at it tonight."

She bent toward the light, holding the picture in the glow, regarding it with a look of tender compassion. "Poor child!" she said softly. "Poor, foolish child!" When she raised her eyes again to his he saw that they were shining with tears.

An unreasoning impulse seized him and he acted upon it without debate,

taking her letters from his pocket and finding the one he had read last. "I think you would better look at that," he said with the same unvarying quiet, and gave it into her hand.

She seated herself and did as he bade her, following the lines slowly, intently, while he stood beyond the table, his gaze fixed upon her rapt face. He had thought to see her perturbed, but not a nerve of her body stirred. When she had finished reading she suffered the letter to drop into her lap, her hands folded upon it, her eyes closing wearily. For a long time she sat thus, motionless, musing; then, slowly, she turned to face him. She misinterpreted what she saw—the immobile line of the lips and the stern set of the square chin. "Are you determined to close your heart against sympathy?" she questioned. "Can't you feel with me a little pity for the child?"

He could not trust himself to answer. She arose and drew nearer to him, with drooping head. "Can't you be sorry for the child?" she repeated; "for the child who got what she wanted? Doesn't it move you to know how wrong her wish was—how terribly, mistakenly wrong?"

Her wonderful eyes were fixed upon his. What was it he saw in their matchless depths? Disclosure?—confession? A fiery exultation quickened within him, thrilling him. "I may have her!" flashed his thought. "It rests with me!" But his inexorable will crushed the thought down. He turned away from her, pacing the length of the room and back again. When he spoke it was with impassive dignity.

"No," he said. "The child was altogether right; it is the woman who is wrong. I am quite sure of that. The child held love sacred, but the woman would trifle with it." A sense of vast relief welled from the depths of his heart as he knew that his danger was mastered; he hesitated no longer. "I am speaking as your friend. The child wanted an absolute, blind, unquestioning love; the

woman has found it, yet would put it away because it gives her poor, sick, morbid vanity no unwholesome sweets to feed upon."

She recoiled as though he had struck her. He smiled grimly. "You think I am giving you pain; but I am hurting only your diseased vanity. I would wound that to death if I could, and you would thank me for it afterward. You must know the truth some time; you would better hear it from me now. You have spoken of your life as a travesty. So it is; but you have never honestly tried to find the responsibility for it. You said your story today seemed so wretchedly poor and mean. So it did; but do you want to know why? It was because you told only the naked facts, stripped of all drapery of false, self-torturing fancy. You told the simple truth; you had been deceiving yourself with lies."

An almost savage delight filled him as he saw how his words wrought upon her—her shocked resentment, her flaming anger, her abject humiliation and shame at what his merciless dissection had laid bare. She sank into her chair, drooping forward upon the table, hiding her face upon her arms. He felt profound compassion for her defenseless misery; but his purpose was not yet accomplished.

"Your husband loves you," he went on steadily. "He loves you with all his man's strength. That was plain enough to me today; but you have been overlooking that of late, haven't you? Why? In your story you didn't complain of his inconstancy. Then why? Is it because you are sated with an honest man's love? or because you are yourself incapable of steadfastness? I have been thinking of what you said in that letter: 'The time would come when you would sit in judgment upon me and find me only human.' Yes; but I have always preferred to think of the human creature, man or woman, as capable of keeping faith with the best of life."

Her body was shaken by a passion of sobs. He fell silent for a little

time, wisely waiting; then stepped quietly to her side and took her hand gently in his.

"Stella, my friend, I am going to find your husband and send him to you here. This is no case for the law."

"Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye!" cried the bailiff. "The honorable the Circuit Court in and for the County of Mason is now in session!"

Judge Wright glanced at the docket page before him. "In the matter of Ward against Ward," he said quietly. "This matter was taken under advisement, upon the request of counsel. It may now be disposed of. Are the parties in court?"

Judge Westlake took his favorite

attitude, resting negligently against the bar table. "No, your honor, they are not. The fact is, they have left the city for a couple of months, on what might be called a second attack of honeymoon."

A ripple of light laughter stirred in the courtroom, and Judge Wright permitted himself a calm judicial smile.

"Ah, yes! By agreement of counsel there will be no formal decree entered, and all papers in the case may be withdrawn from the files. The next matter on the call is Morgan against the Continental National Bank, pending upon a motion for re-hearing. Mr. Arkwright, you may present your motion."



DREAM SONG

By Clarence Urmey

MAGIC perfume of a rose
That in Allah's garden grows.

Pale, pale light by Cynthia set
Deep in Twilight's coronet.

Angel music, reed and string,
Through the starlight quavering.

Music, perfume, light enshrine
Thee in every dream of mine.

May this little dream-song be
Music, perfume, light to Thee!



BRAVE MAN

"SO Smithson deserted Miss Barkus almost at the altar! Did his courage desert him?"

"No, it returned."

FARQUHAR'S MASTERPIECE

By Emma Wolf

THE rush and crush of a first night had dwindled down to a few late comers hurrying breathlessly through the foyer and disappearing within the entrances, in haste to anticipate the rising of the curtain. Reynolds of the box-office, relaxing from the strain of the past half-hour, had turned from his little window with a word to Morrison, the business manager, when summarily recalled to his post.

"Evening, Reynolds. Anything left for me?"

At the pleasant, mellow voice, Reynolds veered around as if electrified, his face flaming with sudden excitement.

"Evening, Mr. Farquhar," he stammered. "I—I'm afraid your seat has been sold for——"

"Oh, that's all right. Anything will do tonight. But I see little Craig beyond there. He'll fix me."

For a half-second Reynolds's fascinated gaze followed the splendid, nonchalant figure, saw him rouse to alert activity the little usher he particularly favored, idly attitudinizing in the doorway—and then he found his voice.

"Morrison," he called in a tense undertone. "Look here!"

Morrison, apprized of some sensation by the other's tone, swung round in his chair and stepped to the box window just in time to see the familiar figure disappearing into the body of the house.

"Farquhar!" he pronounced, and the two men faced each other with countenances as animated as the headlines of a yellow journal.

"So he's got back," clicked Morrison finally.

"Looks like it."

"Thought he'd lit out for good. Wonder what he has done with—her."

"What's the excitement?" drawled Roberts, the star's manager, from the background.

The men moved from the window. "Oh, we've just been startled by the reappearance of one of the most striking pillars of the theatre—Lawrence Farquhar," explained Morrison, reseating himself at his desk.

"And who is Lawrence Farquhar?"

"But you *are* a stranger, my dear fellow. Farquhar is—or was—dramatic critic for the *Record*, the only critic in these parts worth mentioning. Wrote a successful curtain-raiser himself several years ago, and is generally sought after by artists of all persuasions. He's considered a prince in bohemia and clubland, and is an all-round lion among men—and, no doubt, among women—with that face and figure! But I suppose he's queered himself now forever—socially."

"What has he done?"

"Oh, just took a spin across country in his motor car with his mistress, and married her before anybody could interfere."

"The fool! How does he explain it?"

"He doesn't—or hasn't yet. He has just returned. They said they had sailed for Japan, and everybody thought he would never show up in his old haunts again. His friends were terribly cut up about it. They swore she had doped him or it was done in a state of drunken chivalry, and they had no doubt that he could

extricate himself legally from his temporary madness. But he's the kind that dies game and there's no telling how he is taking it. Most fascinating personality—wins everybody from usher to star. Sort of makes you sick to think it should happen to him."

"Why?" shrugged Roberts. "From what you say it's the sort of thing that would be likely to happen to one of his sort. It's all in the adventure."

"Yes, but such a thing sticks."

"Sticks! Has he a family?"

"Not a soul here."

"Well, then, no one's hurt—and society has an easy memory. Don't be provincial, Morrison!" And Roberts lit his cigar with sophisticated grace.

Farquhar had been ushered into an obscure seat, and, during the entire performance, he remained unobserved. He had not sought to hide—for Farquhar, who found something to laugh at in everything, found it in himself to laugh even now—but, in the event, he accepted the reprieve with an inscrutable sense of comfort. Anyone else would have delayed his reappearance until the following day, but it was characteristic of Farquhar to do whatever he desired whenever he desired, without forethought, and, not being a moralist, he had little to fear from any possible discomfort of afterthought.

So, like the criminal impelled to return to the scene of his crime, Farquhar had returned to the scene of his best weakness—the theatre. It was all a "show" to him, even this waiting for the curtain to rise—the men and women in evening attire, the flutter, the soft whisper, the smiling faces, life, as it were, *en masque*—it satisfied his dramatic instinct and folded him round like a loved and accustomed garment.

His gaze wandered carelessly, absently, without effort at recognition over the sea of faces, noticing many that he knew, each bringing a different twinge to his self-consciousness. But he was abruptly arrested by a face at

the opposite side of the house. The man was leaning back in his seat, surveying the house with an apparently unconcerned air, but the refinement, yet power, of thought in the broad brow with its sweeping mass of blond hair, the eyes quiet yet watchful, the mouth soft yet sardonic, the whole storied face, caught Farquhar as in a net, and, breathless, he leaned forward.

The next instant he sank back with a smothered laugh—he had been gazing at his own reflection in the mirror opposite. And then something swooped over him mightily.

"Lawrence Farquhar," came the words to his inner sense, "Lawrence Farquhar—deceased."

They detached him from his surroundings, engulfed the *ci-devant* dramatic critic, the man fallen from grace, the prodigal returned—leaving only the Artist alone with his Idea. The curtain rose, the mimic life on the stage began, the curtain fell, the audience applauded, strolled into the foyer, and back. The curtain rose again, the play went on. But Farquhar sat with eyes unseeing and ears unheeding, the spell of the creator upon him. He had given himself up to his pet passion—he was creating a masterpiece.

And in this first moment of rebound from his disastrous folly, he flung himself into the inspiration with an abandon which left reality with small hold upon him. When, finally, the curtain descended for the last time, by instinct, rather than perception, he rose with the audience, and passed with the slowly-moving mass through the congested exits, his eyes beyond upon the night and the indistinct outlines of carriages lined up before the entrance.

"Pardon—you are stepping on my gown."

The sweet, cold voice shook him roughly. He stepped hurriedly back, raising his hat. "I beg your pardon," he replied in a thick, unsteady tone.

She had turned only partially, but, at his voice, her startled eyes swept over his ashen face and were instantly

averted. Her companion, arrested, looked back.

"Farquhar," he cried impetuously, dropping her hand from his arm and extending both hands to him. "When did you get—by Jove, delighted to see you! Town's been empty without you. Er—yes—see you at the club tomorrow, I suppose? Until then——"

The crowd separated them and the Blounts moved on to their carriage. Through his own joyous awkwardness, young Blount had felt, rather than seen, the flush fading from, and leaving a fixed pallor upon Honora's averted face, and Farquhar's smile had seemed only to push him away. He shut the carriage door with a bang.

"Why did you do that?" he exclaimed hotly, as they were whirled away.

Honora drew her luxurious cloak more closely about her with a convulsive little shiver. "Do what?" she asked, leaning back with closed eyes, striving to keep the sick feeling from rising to a moan.

"Why did you drag me away from Farquhar? Why didn't you speak to him?" inquired her brother, with rising anger.

"I didn't drag you away, Jack."

"Well, why didn't you speak to him?"

"Why did you speak to him?" she retorted haughtily.

"Why—what! Did you think—? But no, you couldn't suppose any fellow would be likely to cut Lawrence Farquhar because he went and did—that—in a fit of mental aberration. He is still Lawrence Farquhar, prince of good fellows, to all who know him."

"A rather degraded prince, don't you think?" she asked wearily.

"Who—Farquhar? It couldn't affect him in the least. Why should it?"

"Because—association——"

"My dear girl——"

"Please don't 'my dear girl' me with that air of superiority. You know he has flouted respectability—you ought to know he is no longer respectable!"

"Oh, hang respectability!"

Honora breathed a sobbing little laugh. "As you will, dear. Only you won't invite me to the hanging, will you?—or insist upon my calling on—Mrs. Lawrence Farquhar? I don't suppose you'll expect me to do that?"

"Bosh! But if Farquhar expects it of any of us, no one will disappoint him."

"That is friendship, I suppose. How maleable is morality in the hands of good men!"

"And how vicious is virtue in the hands of good women! You hit Farquhar straight between the eyes to-night, Honora."

"Possibly. But no doubt he was not unprepared."

"You were fast friends once."

"Once. That has nothing to do with now."

"But you are not his keeper—or his honor's keeper. What has he done to you?"

"Nothing. But one has the right to one's approval or disapproval, you know. And I shall never—willingly—speak to Lawrence Farquhar again."

"Honora—what a d-deliberate fool you are."

"How well you choose your adjectives, dear. Deliberate—yes—just that."

"Because, in a moment of madness—some people might call it something else—a man marries the woman he has been living with——"

"He had not!" The cry came involuntarily, flooding her whole face with pain.

"Honora! Then what in thunder——"

"I knew she was a bad woman. And how dare you force this hateful conversation on me! I'm sure it's nothing to me—and I never want to hear another word about it—as long as I live. Do you hear, Jack?"

But she cried about it all night, and found it necessary to rise an hour earlier the next morning to obliterate her confessional of tears.

"Farquhar!"

Blount had but passed out of hearing

when the second cry of recognition came, and Farquhar turned toward his friend with a dazed smile.

"Ah, Burke, you?" he murmured.

"What did you make of the show?" asked Burke as they pressed into the night.

"Oh—hasheesh."

"Coming my way? I'm bound for the club."

"The club? I'm with you, but first let me lay the dust in my brain, my dear fellow. It's choking thick."

They turned in at the bar and Farquhar began to drown thought, sense, vision of Honora Blount, and the mad knowledge which had come to him with her vacant stare. "I love her, I love her, I love her!" his whole agonized being had cried, and now he strove to still the vain reverberation, laughing aside Burke's remonstrance, striving only to escape the new undreamed of obsession with its knouting "too late."

Burke's persistent hand upon his shoulder jogged him sharply. He looked heavily down at its sinewy slenderness.

"Come out of this," said Burke again.

Farquhar looked into his severe face with a ghost of the smile of interested amusement with which he had always greeted him.

"Come along," insisted Burke, flushing under the look.

Farquhar continued to study him, and Burke suddenly caught his arm and led him out, holding him close and steady. They walked quickly and in silence, the wind, like a witch, leaping and howling about them as in derision. Presently Burke's solemnity, coupled with all that had preceded his appearance, struck Farquhar's befogged senses as something humorous, part of a morality play, the arm of righteousness, of law and order, snatching up the burning brand just in the nick of time—nice, neat, conventional—the moral in at the finish. He followed in grinning submission, hopeless, laughing, dual as ever.

When they reached Burke's apart-

ments, Farquhar made for the great leathern chair in the window.

"Try the couch," suggested Burke.

"Oh, I'm not quite so bad as you'd have me," returned Farquhar lightly, surprised at the hoarseness of his own voice. He threw his head well back upon the cushions and, for a second, even Burke's unesthetic senses acknowledged the strong Viking-beauty of the man. He turned and seated himself at a slight distance from him, busying himself with some papers upon the table. The lamp before him cast a glow upon his lean, set face with its high, narrow brow.

"Hello, Salvation Army!"

Burke gently lowered his paper at the mellow call and turned his pleasant hazel eyes upon his friend. Farquhar was studying him amusedly, as was his wont.

"Hello," Burke returned, with a restrictive smile.

"Feeling unusually righteous?"

"Not unusually."

"Good for you. But you ought to be—by contrast."

"I wasn't contrasting."

"That's noble of you, Burke. But you were, just the same, subconsciously."

"I never do anything subconsciously."

"Straightforward, eh? Yes, I understand. That's one-half of me, too—my better half."

Then their eyes met and Farquhar again laughed amusedly.

"Where is she?" asked Burke shortly.

Farquhar eyed him with cold curiosity. "What sort of non-sensitive species do you belong to, anyway?" he asked slowly.

"You know me," returned Burke, and a silence fell between them.

"Well," drawled Farquhar finally, with a long-drawn breath, "why don't you continue?"

"I asked you a question. You didn't exactly ask me whether my grandmother was a monkey, but your answer was of that evasive order."

"You asked me, 'Where is she?' Well, I don't know."

Burke half-rose with an incoherent apology, but Farquhar motioned him back.

"Of course you couldn't know," he said in a bored tone; "you couldn't know that I—had regained consciousness."

"Is she to be bought?" suggested Burke gruffly.

Farquhar made a mock-gallant bow. "I have no doubt—by the highest bidder," he said quietly.

"Good heavens, man! I didn't mean that! I meant papers served—divorce."

"Oh, I hadn't thought."

"Well, think."

"My dear Miles, you are as sudden and sensational as dynamite."

"Well, but think!"

"Let me turn myself over, will you?" Something in his gray eyes checked the other, but there was a shade of tired appeal in their depths and Burke was satisfied and waited.

The next moment Farquhar laughed—a peculiar sound, blended of weariness and hilarity.

Burke waited.

"You remind me," said Farquhar, "of a man I once knew. He had ideas like rockets—they went up in a glory, but came to earth merely sticks."

"Who was he?"

"Name of Lawrence Farquhar—deceased."

"Faugh! Don't get maudlin. Brace up to the question."

"Ah," murmured Farquhar gently, "it wouldn't be exactly—brave, I'm thinking."

"You're not thinking—you're feeling. For God's sake, Larry, think who she is—who you are!"

"My dear fellow, I may be a beast; but I am also a man."

"I know, I know. But, Larry—"

"Can't consider it. Besides, I'm flat broke."

"You!"

"Debts—speculations—living—and—I forget the rest."

"Four months!"

"Come, Burke, you're getting explosive."

Burke subsided. Presently a flush spread slowly from his firm, protruding chin to his high, narrow brow.

"What're you going to do?" he asked in an oddly quiet tone.

"Morally—I'm going to continue to forget. Practically, I'm going to write my Masterpiece."

"Working at something?"

"The Idea came to me tonight."

"Well, hold it."

"I intend to."

"And—hustle."

Farquhar laughed spiritlessly. "What are *you* hustling at now?" he asked, the sick feeling of emptiness and failure returning to him.

Burke hesitated. "Did you know I had come into a legacy?" he asked modestly, as though confessing to some embarrassingly brilliant feat.

"No! You, Burke, you? Your hand on it, dear boy. When and how?" The warm interest which endeared Farquhar to all his fellows shone from him now and drew Burke, ever his unflinching admirer, the closer to him.

"My Uncle Allingham—mother's brother—Manchester capitalist—a round hundred thousand pounds."

"May he be blessed in heaven for it, as you are on earth. How glad I am for you, Burke. What will you do with it?"

"I've done with it—some—already."

"Of course. What?"

"A half interest in the *News*."

"Whew! That means work, I suppose. What for?"

"The Third Congressional District."

Farquhar's comprehensive gaze enfolded him. "You'll get there," he said quietly.

"What makes you so cock-sure?"

"Why, man alive, you wear blinkers."

Burke screwed his attention upon him. "You mean I stick within my limitations?" he asked.

"No, I mean you keep your goal always in sight. You'll arrive."

"How do you compute that?"

"By my failures."

"By heaven, Larry, if I had your powers!"

"Cut preachments out, my boy."

"I was thinking of myself."

"How?"

"With your gifts of pen——"

"My twaddle, you mean."

"Do you remember that night at the Prattler's when you spoke on Cuba? There wasn't one among us who didn't thrill into wonderment. In that moment you were more than playwright—you were statesman."

At the last word Farquhar's hands unconsciously clinched. "It was a big subject," he breathed rather than said.

"You could do as much with any big subject," suggested Burke, leaning a little forward, a dry, clicking sound in his throat.

"Yes," said Farquhar gruffly, his nostril slightly dilating. "Well, what of it?" he added shortly.

"If it were worth your while."

"You couldn't make it worth my while."

"The grind?"

"Call it the grind."

"A few minutes ago I startled you with an idea. Farquhar, what would you do to get out of—the pit that you've dugged?"

The answer came draggingly, passionlessly, but final as death, for back of it lay the knowledge which had come to him through a girl's unseeing eyes. "I would give the ten best years of my life."

Their eyes locked, each thinking of himself.

"You are extravagant, as usual," said Burke with an abortive laugh.

"Would you give two—to me?"

"Hoot, man, would you be marry-ing me?"

Burke's grin was light. "I told you I have money," he pursued tensely. "You said she could be bought—by the highest bidder. Annul your marriage—buy your release."

Farquhar's heart gave a leap toward freedom, but the next instant he laughed dully. "She likes the—respectability of it," he said.

"But cold cash?"

"Oh, speak out and have done. I hate the subject."

"Let me think," soliloquized Burke, his eyes screwing closer in his intense concentration.

"Listen. I will give you—ten—fifteen thousand to get you free of her—and five for yourself—if you bind your powers to my bidding for two years."

Farquhar looked at him in unconcealed amazement.

Burke met his gaze steadily. He wore his blinkers openly. "I have offered you a sum for your services for two years," he continued clearly in a low tone. "I am bound to win the congressional fight. I shall need you—as secretary—afterward. I have money. I have ability. I have a powerful organ in the *News*. I have no voice, no gift of words. Give me yours—and I have won."

"Ah!" murmured Farquhar, gathering light.

"You said you would give ten years of your life. I ask you for two—in exchange for freedom from a—I beg your pardon! Two years of your mind and pen—till I am landed at Washington."

"You overrate me, Croesus," smiled Farquhar dazedly.

Burke thrust a sheet of paper before him. "Write me five sentences on the Canal affair," he ordered brusquely.

"I've been four months off the earth. Give me the latest developments."

Farquhar, fascinated, drew nearer the table, and Burke began to speak rapidly. Farquhar put up a desisting hand. His pencil rested upon the paper. The touch bore life. His head seemed held in a vice of concentration—his pencil flew.

Burke stood by with fingers crooked. "Enough," he cried impatiently. "I said five sentences——"

"Hush," murmured the writer.

Burke tore the paper from him. Farquhar sat with bent head.

"By heaven," came Burke's voice slowly. "By heaven, Larry!" He was regarding him curiously, a white light of eagerness sharpening his fea-

tures. "Will you do it?" he asked hoarsely.

"What?" questioned the other.

"Editorials—the *News* signs its editorials—speeches—as I ask for them. Giving me—your identity?"

It was Farquhar's turn to throw the searchlight of his gaze upon him.

"Do you know what you are proposing?" he demanded sternly.

"You are opportune?" parried Burke.

"The devil always is," thrust Farquhar.

"I wear blinkers," held Burke with a hard smile. "I arrive."

The room was still.

"Well?" broke in Burke's voice sharply.

Farquhar raised his eyes to him as he stood before him, and thrust out a white wrist from his cuff. "Is it blood you're wanting for the signing," he asked with a characteristic Hibernian twist to his tongue.

"Done?" asked Burke, ignoring the pleasantry.

Farquhar bowed his head.

Burke's hand clapped down on his shoulder. "Thanks," he breathed raspingly.

"Don't mention it," said Farquhar sardonically.

"I won't," agreed Burke with a short grin. "And meanwhile," he continued, as if a change of subject might be refreshing, "you can write your Masterpiece."

"Yes," said Farquhar abstractedly, "I can write my Masterpiece."

"And—dream new benedictine dreams."

Farquhar arose slowly. He seemed to extinguish Burke, yet Burke was no mean figure. "I never was in that running, you remember," he said gently.

"You!" scoffed Burke, turning for drinks.

The golden wine snapped and foamed importunately.

"To you," smiled Farquhar, holding his glass to the light—"the Honorable Miles Burke."

Their glasses clicked.

"To yours," smiled Burke in turn—"Farquhar's Masterpiece." And their glasses clicked again.

"Burke," said Farquhar, putting down his empty glass, "I have just been wondering whether you had this—venture—in mind when you haled me from that bar."

Burke thought a while. "I may have," he returned candidly. "But at that time I didn't know it."

Farquhar laughed, delighted. "For a politician, Burke," he said inscrutably, "you're a rarely honest man."

Then, after some arrangements for the morrow, he went off.

Far back in the world of his boyhood's dreams, Lawrence Farquhar had meant to captain his fate and cut a significant figure among men. With his teeming mentality and fertile imagination, he might have stood for the promise of many things to many men, but to himself he had promised only one thing: to identify himself with the history of his nation. It was a career to satisfy all desires of brain, energy, imagination, ambition—ambition to spend himself, to fling his bigness and strength broadcast, to grow in giving, to use the immense vitality with which he was invested upon the widest problems of life, without vanity of any sort save the sporting zest of the athlete and the dramatic instinct of the artist. And then—and then—— The gay, good things had come so easily—the admiration of men, the love of women—had crowded so persistently into his pursuits, enveloping his joy-loving temperament in their allurements, that with the philosophy of the hare, he had rested here and rollicked there, giving himself as demanded, sure that when the time came he would be master of it—and had arrived at utter ineffectiveness.

Burke's scheme now dragged him back to his first muttons. Moreover, he was under contract. Had the nature of the bond been other, he might have chafed, fretted, until free. As it was, before a week had passed, he felt no yoke, he was monarch in his

own domains, intoxicated with the knowledge of his power, careless of his pseudonymity. Again, with the joy of the prodigal, he was giving himself as demanded, but for the first time he was seriously giving of his very best. His jewels went forth to decorate another. His glory was in their making. Burke's was the throne, his the power behind. Not that he exulted in that fact in what might be called his reckoning moments. For Farquhar all reckoning had ceased when Burke handed him certain cheques, and his debt to folly was paid. The rest was art, pure and unadulterate.

When the public began to couple Burke's name with the admiration evoked by the remarkable editorials appearing in the *News*, and men spoke of them to Farquhar as "epochal" he smiled an ungrudging smile of agreement and frankly said, "You're about right." When men expressed surprise over this unexpected manifestation of Burke's eloquence and grasp of things, he would say ambiguously, with a far-away regard, "There's no telling." He rather enjoyed his namelessness. In those first months he was more creator than man.

As for Burke, the bargain prospered even better than he had planned, and he trotted serenely forward on his road in undisturbed satisfaction. That his was the unearned increment, that he had taken advantage of a man who was down, were views which did not obscure his perspective. Not to have taken advantage of a propitious opportunity would have been the ridiculous procedure, the one weak step, in his opinion, to occasion regret. He had paid in tangible, just proportion for every line of his fame. His conscience did not disturb his sleep.

But the deception was not without its pains. The lights in Burke's sanctum burned long after the departure of his companions, and, as he poured over the closely-written, impressive lines, committing them *in toto* to his fine memory before committing them in shreds to his waste-basket, turning

to this book and to that to verify an allusion or an authority, wondering, approving, expanding, doing all in painstaking, unshrinking honesty to his purpose, a materialist might have said he had earned his gains. Men pointed him out as unmistakably headed for Washington, and his keen, forceful personality did not belie the prophecy. He had his goal, he wore blinkers and he was arriving.

And as Farquhar gave no sign of his complicity, so Burke was responsible for the rumor that Farquhar was at last engaged upon his "Masterpiece." This was easily credited.

"He has had his lesson," his little world said with a species of curious regard when the news of his release from his marital misstep was bruited. "The man has changed." And signs of instinctive respect invariably followed the regard. In truth, he had changed. The old gay complaisance was superseded by a gravity, a seriousness and tenacity of purpose, a reticence of demeanor which estranged many of his former cronies and sent romantic women whispering into corners.

"I was speaking of you last night to a former friend of yours," said Burke once in the twilight, when they were alone together.

"Who might that be?" he asked, with his face to the window.

"Miss Blount—Miss Honora Blount. You knew—know her well, I believe?"

"Knew," corrected Farquhar laconically.

"What? Oh! She seemed rather interested in your present pursuits."

"Yes?" Burke could not see the painful tide burning up and over his face.

"I told her you were busy with your Masterpiece."

He waited in vain for a response.

"She wanted to know what form it was taking, but as I didn't know, I couldn't satisfy her curiosity. She said she had seen you on the Avenue and thought you changed."

So she had noticed him—had thought it worth while to discuss him!

He passed her not long after on the street, and, summoning all his courage to aid his desire, he looked her fairly in the eyes. A pained embarrassment came into her face, but she met the challenge with a sudden access of sweetness and bowed gently, if distantly. Farquhar returned the salutation in kind, but his lips were pale, his heart nigh to bursting. That was the first time; afterward he came to face these occurrences with calm, but out of them his dream grew.

"I might have won her before," he thought bitterly, retrospective for the moment. But—born romancer as he was, carrying always in his being the "air" presumptive to happiness, he put the devil of his past behind him and hugged his vague dream in silence. It became the one true intimacy of his heart, the light of his night, the tender effulgence of which made beautiful the long, lonely way. And the desire to let her know, to send forth some sign that would give her pause before, all unknowing, she should drift forever from his life, became at times so acute that it took all his new-found fortitude to keep him from rushing to her and winning or losing all in the premature act.

One day he came face to face upon her at an exhibition of paintings, and, with all the dignity of his untold love upon him, answered her glance of recognition with a few words replete with his oldtime ease and grace.

"But you have not told me what you think of this picture," she detained, as he made to pass on. "You seemed so deeply absorbed in it as I came up."

He held the railing tightly, his wistful gaze resting upon the quiet tones of the pictured sunset, conscious only of her graciousness, her nearness.

"It is very still," he said in a low, meditative tone. "It is all spirit—an unspoken prayer—like the end of an unspoken love."

He was not looking at her, he could not see the tinge of pain in the girl's eyes. And she spoke lightly.

"Why, that's a tragedy," she said.

"It—the picture—is too dim for that, I think."

"'Tis all what it isn't," he suggested whimsically. "You'd never think what you do think if you stop to think. The afterthought's the thought you know—the truth comes in the silence."

Her eyes were fastened on the picture, but by the faint flush on her clear cheek, and the pensive droop to her wooable lips, Farquhar knew his words had not rung hollow. When she turned to speak to him, he was gone—Farquhar was nothing if not artistic.

"I can wait," he said to himself in the madness of his joy, and he bent his head to his work with increasing ardor, almost as if in prayer.

Meanwhile, Burke had won the nomination and was gallantly arriving.

But probably in all his after career he never experienced a more triumphant moment than that which occurred the week before election. Farquhar had come in unexpectedly as the night was verging to morning.

"I saw you turning in," he explained, striding up to his friend and gripping him by the shoulder. "Burke, old man, you've won out."

"Aren't you a trifle previous?"

"Nonsense. It's an accepted fact. I congratulate you."

They sat down opposite each other, and the flush on Burke's face, young and ingenuous in its undisguised delight, brought a smile to Farquhar's grave lips.

"You look happy as a lark," he remarked.

"I am," said Burke, covering his eyes with his hand for a moment. Then, "Farquhar," he broke forth, "I owe everything to you."

"Pooh," said Farquhar, "I was only one of your irons. Besides, that subject is tabooed."

"This once," persisted Burke with unusual fervor. "The—scheme—has succeeded—out of all proportion to the output. No, no, that isn't what I want to say. I mean the effect has been farther reaching than I ever dared to dream."

"Indeed?" questioned Farquhar interestedly.

"To put it bluntly—it has brought me the love of the only woman whose love I have ever cared to win. It, I say—you!"

"Say on. It sounds really Cyranoesque."

"Yes—barring the nose and the motive. I am to her all they have seemed to her."

"And?"

"I have not undeceived her."

"Good. Why should you?"

"Exactly. Why should I? All's fair in love—as in politics, you know. And, Farquhar—she is worth anything!"

"I knew it," smiled the other gently. "Who is she?—if I may know."

"Miss Blount—Honora Blount."

"Ah."

Burke, still flushed, smiling, sure, regarded expectantly the bent head of his companion. The silence grew.

Presently Farquhar lifted his still face to view.

"Yes," he said slowly, "yes, I congratulate you. And, Burke, I was about to say—I desire to break that contract."

"You——"

"I break that contract."

"But it holds good for six months longer!"

"Yes? That's nothing to me. I can refund you part of the payment. I've done."

"But—but—you're breaking faith."

"As I say, that's nothing to me. It may be to you."

"My God, Larry!"

Farquhar met his eyes and smiled out of the strange pallor of his face. It was an ugly sight, as though something horrid had crushed out the beauty of his soul. The phenomenon steadied Burke.

"What if I refuse to release you?" he rasped.

"Refuse!" Farquhar threw back his head and laughed, a mocking, cutting laugh.

"Stop that!" commanded Burke angrily, rising to his feet. "Stop!" His

face had gone a dark red. He stood over Farquhar, tall and menacing. Suddenly he took a step back, his hands unclenching themselves. "I release you," he said quietly.

Farquhar arose. "And—the writing?" he murmured, a sharp breathlessness cutting his words short.

"I—no longer need you."

"Are you quite sure?"

Burke did not answer. He stood tense and still, his teeth set, his eyes gathering light. Then he moved to the table, drew paper and pencil toward him and sat down. Pencil in hand, he turned and looked meaningfully up at his accomplice.

Farquhar caught the telepathic challenge. As in a dream, a similar scene enacted more than eighteen months before, passed throbbingly across his mental vision and hypnotically he advanced to Burke's side.

"The Harbor Appropriation," he returned discordantly, in reply to the unspoken demand.

Burke's hand wavered over the paper like a child taking his first steps. He wrote, erased, hesitated, set his pencil hard, Farquhar watching with patient, contemptuous smile. Then abruptly pencil, hand, head seemed to gather strength. For five, ten minutes he wrote incessantly, Farquhar watching with the same patient, contemptuous smile.

At last Burke pushed the paper toward him without glancing up. "What do you make of this?" he asked indistinctly.

Farquhar picked it up and read. For several minutes the room was quite still. Burke raised his head, his face blazing with excitement. Farquhar's eyes were still riveted upon the paper; not a tremor disturbed the impassivity of his statuesque face.

The glow faded from Burke's eyes. "Well?" he demanded, with a chill laugh.

Slowly Farquhar's gaze met his. "Again, I congratulate you!" he responded gently. "As you said, you no longer need me. I acknowledge I am beaten."

"Beaten! You! Master!" Burke, radiant, sprang to his feet, both hands outstretched. "Accept your disciple's eternal thanks. What do you think of me?"

Farquhar held the eager hands closely. "Softly," he advised, apparently himself again. "What was it? An inspiration?"

"Inspiration—yes, if the hackneyed definition—perspiration—holds true." His eyes were luminous with triumph as he ingenuously flung out his explanation. "God, how I've studied you, Larry! How I've analyzed the involuntary turns of your mind, its habit of reasoning, working, its wonderful magnetism, the *sources* of its seemingly inimitable power. You know I never miss a chance—you know I 'wear blinkers.' So I diagnosed you—dissected you—labored to imitate you. And—it's good? It's alive?"

"As you are."

"You intoxicate me. And you—your Masterpiece? How is it coming on?"

"Of what are you speaking?"

"Of your play, of course."

"Oh, that—that's nothing."

"But why?"

"I dropped that long ago—it didn't interest me. You know it was conceived the same night I began—you." His sudden laugh startled the echoes and he continued hilariously, "You see, I'd found another subject that suited me entirely—entirely. It's finished now."

"Hurrah! And what is it called?"

"Whisht! It's to be anonymous, lad; but I'll let you into the secret. It's all a play, to be sure, and it's called—and I hope you'll enjoy the sound of it—it's called 'The Honorable Miles Burke.' Eh?"



BRANGWAIN ON THE WATCH TOWER

By Jeannette I. Helm

BELOW me as I mount the winding stair
I faintly hear the bugle's distant blast.
O lovers, dreaming in the darkness there,
Take heed! No dreams can last!

Afar on distant hills and forest brake,
The soft glow of a sinking moon is cast;
O ye who dream with open eyes, awake!
Take heed! No dreams can last!

Beyond the sea upspring the beams of light
Where jealous Day his chariot speeds fast,
To strike his golden arrows at the Night.
Take heed! No dreams can last!

Across the tower comes a crimson stain,
Night and its lover's dreams will soon be past.
My voice from out the darkness cries in vain:
"Take heed! No dreams can last!"

THE CHAMELEON

By Edwin L. Sabin

I THINK observers would agree,
And make the deposition,
That when he called that evening, he
Was pink as to condition.

But when the damsel spoke full well
Of some man she had seen,
In quicker time than I may tell
With envy he turned green!

Now wait! While harking to her praise,
This most astounding fellow
(The maid beheld him in amaze)
With jealousy grew yellow!

As hesitant she paused, anon
Before her startled sight
This anthropoid chameleon,
Egad, with fear waxed white!

And still the transformations came,
Successively to tax her;
For never twice, you see, the same,
With anger he turned black, sir!

And as he suddenly bethought
His anger he might rue,
Another ghastly change was wrought—
He instantly was blue!

But watch him! While with wrinkled brow
He chewed reflection's cud he
Presented to the damsel now
A typical brown study!

"Can this be he," that damsel cried,
"With whom I oft have spooned?"
And, swishing out, all horrified,
She left him there, *marooned!*

ECHOES

By Henry C. Rowland

I T was to fill the time until we should meet again that I had bought the schooner which had come up from the islands loaded with mahogany. I had no especial fondness for the sea, no dislike for it, but at least it is void of human sympathy and it cannot be compassionately intrusive. So I bought the vessel and put aboard her a crew picked from my own slaves. They knew my ways and could do my will unspoken, and would not prove obstacles to me in my flight from myself.

She had been with me when for the last time I watered the little violets which bloomed beneath her window. They were like her, these violets; in the morning they lifted their sweet faces just as she lifted her face—both had the same subtle fragrance—and they were such hardy little creatures for all of their delicacy—like herself. Some of them I culled and laid upon her bosom, clasped in her cold little hand; the rest I planted on the bosom of the little mound beneath which she rested. Then I groped out through the swift afterglow and back to the empty home she had so loved.

And so I bought the schooner. She had lain disused the summer through, and many times while wandering hand in hand along the purple beach we had admired together the free sweep of her lines, the sea-going sheer of her decks, the flare of her full bows.

"When the tobacco crop is in," she told me one evening as she sat upon the broad arm of my chair and listened to the whippoorwills, "we shall charter the *Starlight* and go upon a cruise, just you and I and old Yuba—

for you cannot steer, darling, with your arm as it is now. Then, if we like her we shall buy her, and then . . . and then"—her breath came fast like the breath of a child—"we shall drift far away to find new worlds."

But she had not waited for me.

Once during her illness she had whispered in my ear, her poor little arms about my neck, "If I die, darling, buy the *Starlight*. She will help you—to wait."

So I had bought the *Starlight*—to help me to wait. The month before her illness I had chartered the little vessel and we had cruised to Martinique. She had loved it; often when I thought that she was sleeping below I had felt her sweet presence at my elbow and her hand had fluttered into mine as I leaned on the rail and rested my eyes upon the star-hung distance.

And so, when it was all over, I bought the *Starlight* and sent my blacks aboard. They were St. Thomas men, the same whom I had had before, and they knew and understood me.

"Yas, marster," said black Simon, and this was all he said as he pulled me out aboard, "marster, he know—me know—missie, she dar—she dar!"

I understood and did not answer. My quartermaster, Yuba, a Marabout of great age, also understood.

"Marster know," he said simply. "Yuba know. De sea, he no like de shore—no, no!" He wove interlacing figures with his hands. "No criss-cross so," said he.

They understood, these blacks. And so, as soon as might be I barred my door and kissed the upturned faces of

the violets upon the bosom of the little mound and then fled with shuddering heart to my vessel. At daylight I sailed between the Capes, and midnight found me in the Gulf Stream.

It was dark in splashes where the clouds hung low; the breeze was light and baffling. Yuba was at the wheel. At midnight I thought that perhaps I might sleep, so I walked aft toward the companionway. On the corner of the house there was a place where she used to love to sit and watch the great following seas. And here I crouched upon the deck, and with arms flung across the heavy structure my soul went out to her.

It was while I groveled there in the warm reek of the brine-soaked darkness that she came to me, and I felt her presence as so often I had felt it before. No matter how deep my sleep, she had never stirred and awakened to face the dubious dark alone; no matter how encompassing my fatigue from work in the blaze of a tropic sun she had never come to me unannounced. And so, with the flaming seas crumbling beneath the bows and the spill of wind from the close-hauled mainsail smiting soft, quick blows upon my bowed shoulders and the pale fire-flecked darkness all about, I felt her come, and looked up to see her rosy face smiling at me against the leeward murk. It was not as I had seen it last, a-writhe with the pain which pays the tithe of a new soul, but radiant and with red lips curving in a smile, and clear eyes looking joyously into mine. Both arms were stretched to me, and as my heart swelled to meet her there came floating from the void an elliptical body, small as her hand and glowing with a faint but luminous purple. It drifted slowly upward, crossed without obscuring her sweet face, floated over her head, evading my gaze and hung poised above the aureole of fine-spun hair.

For long our eyes clung together in silence; her gaze was of a tenderness which flooded mine even while I rested in the transient content of one eased of a constant pain. Then slowly the

ellipse quivered and faded. Her eyes said "Darling," but not sadly, and when she had gone I turned and staggered aft, heavily content, for I knew that my utter loneliness was at an end and that the thinnest of substance was all that divided us. Dimly and through habit alone I lurched to the binnacle. The sable face of Yuba took black contour against the background of the humid night; his bulging eyes rolled upward from the compass, and the light from the binnacle-lamps painted expression upon his Afrite face. His booming chuckle undertoned the hiss beneath the bilges; it contained no mockery but the wisdom of a race as old as Life, now involute but concentrating the wisdom of ages in reasonless instinct.

"Marster," he muttered, and his black features worked and writhed, "marster, Yuba say um so—missie dar!" His huge hands left the spokes and the massive arms swept before his face with the motion of a swimmer. "Yas, marster—ya, missie dar, missie dar!" And he gloomed off to windward with rolling eyes and flat nostrils spread upon his cheeks.

Happy and infinitely at peace I groped to my bunk, and as I threw myself upon it my arms enfolded and my lips kissed the subtle darkness—for perhaps she was there!

And this, old friend, is why my life is the life of the gull and petrel, and the cut of my vessel's canvas is known upon the Seven Seas. For every night when the sea is not too turbulent she comes to me and we hold long communions, while Yuba, at the wheel, glares away into the misty darkness and his old, old features writhe and twist and his pupils swell like those of a dog following Shapes which weave in the gloom beyond the crimson zone of the camp-fire. And so, while Yuba grips the wheel and mumbles unlearned melodies deep in his sable throat, the Purple Ellipse drifts away and upward, fleeing from my wrapt vision till beneath it appears her smiling face, rosy as the Cross beneath the Egg.

So the pain has all gone from me,

and I wait in such patience as a man may. And sometimes we talk together, and when she goes I wait until the echo of her vision has faded to the tone of the night, and I hear the deep echoes of ancient knowledge in the throat of old Yuba as he peers and mumbles and twists the spokes of the wheel.

A year ago I went home. I watered

her violets—the same in whose tender faces her own was so often crushed. They were thriving, those hardy, tender blossoms. I watered her violets, and then, though I had seen her but the night before, I could not stay, but with wringing heart fled to my vessel and heaved up the anchor. And faithful old Yuba steered out across the sea and into the night.



SOCIAL PESTS

By C. F. Rooper

OF every type of human bore
That merits mundane hisses,
None is deserving of them more
Than he who reminisces.
You recognize perchance the kind
Of creature that I mention,
Who always has the past in mind,
And craves for one's attention.

At dinner parties where stern gloom
Is ever omnipresent,
He'll drool about his mother's tomb
Or something just as pleasant.
While, ere the fish is ta'en away,
He revels in the telling
Long incidents of boyhood's day,
And where he first learned spelling.

The opera you tempt, for rest,
Yet changes ne'er are ringing;
He talks of Gerster at her best,
And Campanini's singing.
You call a living writer bright,
The ozone merely thickens;
No one, he says, was known to write
Since Thackeray and Dickens.

Oh, human pest, beyond compare,
Why are we thus inflicted?
And yet we meet thee everywhere,
With verbiage unrestricted.
So when you dwell above the skies,
And all your bones are rotten,
Some other proser will arise
To see *you're* not forgotten.

THE MAXIMS OF METHUSELAH

BEING THE ADVICE GIVEN BY THE PATRIARCH IN HIS NINE HUNDRED, SIXTY
AND NINTH YEAR, TO HIS GREAT GRANDSON SHEM, ON
THE LATTER'S COMING OF AGE

By Gelett Burgess

THESE are also maxims of Methuselah, which Shem, the son of Noah, copied out that he and his son and his son's sons might be edified and be not ravished of strange women, neither be fooled by the damsels who sought to ensnare them.

2 For length of days was in his right hand, and in his left, much *experience* with the women of the Land of Nod;

3 And of Ethiopia and Assyria and Havilah and of the countries by the Euphrates; for of all these had he earned his loves.

4 ¶My son, keep my words and lay up my commandments with thee and my law as the apple of thine eye, that they may keep thee from the subtle woman and from her who flattereth thee with honied words.

5 For this is her cunning and by *these crafts* doth she practise upon thee when she would bind thee to her side forever; aye, though she be innocent of guile, yet hath she her *system* and it shall not fail.

6 ¶For from my window have I regarded her, and I have beheld her ways how she compasseth the fascination of the simple ones; from her first move unto the end of the game have I watched her out of mine eye. and *this is the manner of her doing*:

7 Lo, she hath met him in a company of youths in the green fields; and she hath espied her quarry; she hath determined to capture him, and *he is already lost*.

ALEPH

8 She establisheth a *personal relation*; she hath made him to notice her from amongst the others; she hath asked him to carry her coat; she hath put her purse into his pocket, and he doeth her service.

BETH

9 She establisheth *proximity*, and of *propinquity* she hath made her use; she hath entreated him to tie her shoe; she hath decorated his button-hole, and her breath is in his face.

GIMEL

10 She hath awakened his *protection*, she hath shown her alarms that he might comfort her; for the dog that barketh and the cow with horns have provoked her fears.

11 And lo, he is *mighty* and stilleth her fears; she hath taken his arm.

12 From a high place he hath lifted her down, even from the stone wall hath he lifted her and she marvelleth at his strength.

DALETH

13 She hath achieved a *tête-à-tête* and she hath told him her *confidence*: she hath poured out her heart.

14 She sayeth: I don't know why I tell thee this, for I have *never* told it before; but surely thou understandest me and *I can trust thee* alway.

HE

15 Behold he hath called for the third time, and she sayeth: Lo, I have missed thee and all day yesterday thou wert in my mind, for I had divers things to say to thee.

16 And when he goeth she sayeth: *When shall I see thee again?*

VAU

17 She establisheth a secret union between them, and in the company of strangers she sayeth to him secret words. She referreth to untellable things; she buildeth up a past and useth it.

18 She giveth him a pet name; she signeth her letters, *the Princess in the Magic Tower*.

ZAIN

19 She wanteth to be treated *as a man*: she yearneth for the simple relation of a *comrade*.

20 She sayeth: Lo, how I trust thee, for thou hast not regarded me merely as a woman; thou hast not made up to me.

21 Yet doeth she the feminine and helpless away, she confesseth her weakness and extolleth his strength; she laugheth in her sleeve.

CHETH

22 She showeth an interest in all things which concern him; of his doings at the *office* she inquireth, and of his comings and goings she displayeth concern.

23 She sayeth: *And how was Old Jones today?* Did he trouble thee? And of that new customer in Peru, hast thou heard again?

24 She readeth the books he readeth: she consulteth the newspapers that she may discuss with him.

25 And she sayeth: Lo, I have read that book which thou mentiondest, and *I agree with thee perfectly*; thou art right concerning it.

TETH

26 She getteth him into the kitchen;

he openeth beer and sardines in the evening; she bindeth an apron about him and she sitteth upon the wash-tubs; on the table she swingeth her *silk stockings*.

27 She standeth beside him when he openeth cases; when he putteth up her shelf she handeth him the hammer and nails; she smileth upon him.

JOD

28 She asketh for his photograph: aye, for the photograph *when he was a baby* she manifesteth envy; she stealeth it from him.

29 She admireth his shoulders; she sayeth: Lo, what a *stunning* profile thou hast! Thy mouth is firm. Behold, thou art distinguished.

30 She inquireth of his mother and his Aunt Jane, his little nephew and all that are within his gates.

CAPH

31 She attempteth his reform; she showeth an interest in his health, saying: Lo, I know well that it *harmeth* thee to inhale cigarettes; why wilt thou not regard thy health? *For my sake* be careful, for if aught afflicted thee then would my heart be bowed down.

32 Yet is it not meet that I should stand between thee and thy pleasures, for I know not the ways of men, nor of their needs. Far be it from me to restrict thee in thy enjoyment.

33 Yet I beseech thee to *wear rubbers*, and warm underwear thou must not neglect.

34 For thou must preserve thy strength and beauty.

LAMED

35 Now seeth she his bachelor apartments where he taketh his ease; and she marveleth at man's *liberty* and freedom until she sayeth: Lo, *would that I were a man* also, and not a woman, for thy freedom maketh me envy thee;

36 Yet *who* doeth thy mending? and thy clean linen, who is there that

layeth it out? who cleaneth up thy room?

37 Who attendeth to thee when thou art sick? Who holdeth thy hand and smootheth thy pillow? For it maketh me to fear for thee.

38 *Promise* me therefore that when thou art stricken thou wilt send for *me*, that I and my sister may visit thee and do what shall be necessary for thy comfort, and we shall come *gladly*.

39 And in her own house she showeth him the contrast; she maketh him to be easy in mind and in body: she waiteth upon him with smiles.

40 She adjusteth the sofa-pillow, she placeth his smoking materials at his hand, she screeneth the light. She giveth deft touches.

41 And she sayeth: Lo, how *lovely* to be a man! Would that I were free also that I might come and go unquestioned; I abhor the feminine touch, and man's simple taste, lo, I admire it. Yea, put thy feet upon the couch and *be comfortable*; strew thine ashes where thou wilt, for it will keep the moths from the rug.

42 And the fool thinketh in his heart: Would to God I had this comfort *alway* and my belongings ever ready at my hand; verily it would be pleasant to be married, and a wife is a desirable thing.

MEM

43 She deferreth to his taste; yea, she maketh him to go with her when she selecteth her hat, and *that which she wisheth* she forceth him to choose for her.

44 She heedeth his words of praise concerning her attire, and the gown he doth not approve will she not wear *before him*.

45 She flattereth his neckties. she calleth his cuff-links *good*.

NUN

46 She provoketh a quarrel; yea, out of thin air she createth strife and disputeth with him.

47 And when he is heated, then doth she humble herself and sayeth;

Lo, *thou* art right. Let me grovel before thee; accept my apology, O lord, for I am as *nothing* in thy sight.

48 Upon her eyelash the tear-drop trembleth, and her lips are lovely with quivering; yet doth she not weep, nor do her eyes grow red.

49 For there she draweth the line; she knoweth that she would be ill-favored and it would avail her nothing.

SAMECH

50 She asketh his advice, and she *pretendeth* to take it; she steereth him cunningly, saying:

51 Lo, I am *so* impractical, but thou hast experience; men and life are known unto thee, *thou* hast understanding.

52 But I am helpless in mine ignorance and in matters of business I *know nothing*.

53 And when he hath spoken words of wisdom she sayeth: Lo, how thou hast holpen me; what would I do without thee!

AIN

54 She boasteth of her happiness and the simplicity of her relations with him, saying: Lo, I am a bachelor maid, *I desire not to marry*; I am contented and a husband is not necessary unto me.

PE

55 When he feeleth safe concerning her, when he looketh upon her as his property, when he monopolizeth her easily without promise of marriage, when he hath grown contented,

56 Then she springeth another man upon him; she dallieth with the handsome stranger, she is seen in the company of callow youths.

57 Yet doth she watch him privily and her sisters tell her concerning him.

TZADDI

58 She disappointeth him upon occasion; he calleth and *she is out*; he cannot understand it and his heart is oppressed.

59 And when she cometh she sayeth: Behold, I was detained, I simply *tore* to

get here, yet was it impossible; I grieve for thee, for I did marvels that I might reach thee in time.

KOPH

60 She establisheth a secret between him and her; yea, she committeth an indiscretion that it may bind them privily together; she relieth upon his honor, she is at his mercy and is fearful.

RESH

61 She provoketh a struggle, and he snatcheth at her fiercely.

62 And she sayeth: Lo, I thought that thou wert a *gentleman*; how *darest* thou impute such and such to me; what *cause* have I given thee?

63 She accepteth his apology.

SCHIN

64 She interesteth herself in the women he hath known; she praiseth them mightily, extolling his discern-

ment: she displayeth magnanimity and *forgiveth* him all things;

65 Yet when she is *sure* of him she pretendeth to be jealous, she accuseth him unjustly, she maketh a mock of his friends.

TAU

66 And at all times she attireth herself with cunning, thinking: lo, I can ensnare him with my *garments*.

67 She dresseth in masquerade costume, she revealeth her ankle, she is surprised in fair morning-gown and her *negligée* is not without peril; she inviteth him to bathe at the seaside and concealeth not her good points from him.

68 But when she cometh down to him with her hair *in a braid*, when she tieth it with a *blue ribbon*, then beware of her, for danger is at hand.

69 Give her then the fruit of her hands and let her own works praise her, for she hath gotten her will and brought him to submission.



THE ACCUSER

By William Hamilton Hayne

A PHANTOM, with reproachful face,
His eyes bereft of joy and grace,
Stood by me in a secret place.

And as I, trembling, turned away,
In sudden shame, I heard him say,
"Poor fool! I am your Yesterday."



EXTRAVAGANT

"SHE'S a very extravagant woman, isn't she?"
"Very. She lives far beyond her alimony."

THE HEALTH-FOOD MAN

By Gideon Wurdz

JOHN GANDY'S life was void of strife, he lived in peace and quiet;
For fifty years he'd had no fears pertaining to his diet.

His only cry was "cake" or "pie"—the kind that mothers make—
Flanked by a dish of game, or fish, or juicy sirloin steak.

But one sad day, John answered, "Nay, I've found such things are bad."
When asked the cause, his reason was, "I've read a Health-Food ad."

"Henceforth am I resolved to try the patent-cereal plan;
I'll thus, forsooth, renew my youth, and be another man.

"The papers say I'll pass away, unless, instead of meat,
I use alone the food that's known as 'Bale's Beheaded Wheat.'

"The bill-boards show if one would grow a brand-new, active brain,
It's not too late to masticate 'Glutenski's Grated Grain.'

"If 'coffee heart' perchance should start, or teeth vacate your jaw,
Relieve the fault with 'Boneless Malt' or 'Antiseptic Straw.'

"For muscles new, and red blood, too, try 'Shakem's Strangled Groats';
For nerves outworn, use 'Cobless Corn' or 'Paddock Pummeled Oats.'"

Hence, Gandy ceased to make his feast from table-d'hôte menu;
Instead of meat, he'd always eat a granary or two.

Where'er he went his only bent was dietary thought;
To heed the laws of health foods was the only thing he sought.

His cunning ear could only hear the food-stuffs he preferred;
That is, should you say "*Parlez vous?*" 'twas "*Barley vous*" he heard!

When neighbors joked and fun was poked, poor John could never laugh;
His only thought was how to glean some grain from all their chaff.

With books, his whim consisted in devouring the leaves;
The only thing that he could sing was "Bringing in the Sheaves."

'Twas even said the newly wed, regardless of the price,
Engaged him for the wedding tour—to eat up all the rice!

From pink to pale, from strong to frail, poor Gandy soon arrived,
Yet still tabooed the kind of food on which his neighbors thrived.

Friends tried to make him shift to steak, and brought it in by stealth;
But, weak and ill, he murmured still, "No, no! I'm full of health!"

And thus he balked and thus he talked and thus he always fed,
Until one night his soul took flight—the neighbors found him dead.

With decent shame his heirs laid claim to Gandy's earthly wealth,
But raised the cry, "Why did he die, since he was full of health?"

"There'll have to be an autopsy to find out why he's dead!"
But to their grief came small relief in what the doctors said:

"As experts we must all agree dementia called him hence;
From heels to brains we've found all grains, except—a grain of sense!"

THE BANKRUPTCY OF TEARS

By Maurice Francis Egan

“A FEW tears just after the ceremony might be in good taste,” said a mother who had been a belle in the seventies to her daughter, to whom she was giving “*les conseils de mariage*.”

“Impossible!” said the bride, who was prepared to blush, but not to weep; “nobody cries now.”

And the mother was startled; it seemed hard to realize that the luxury of tears was no longer the fashion. The weeping person would be as monstrous in society as the truthful one; and what would be the use of those delightful little notes that fly from all quarters of the town if the white, black and parti-colored lie were no longer permitted?

Ah, those tears! Not “hence these tears!” For there are no tears permitted in the classes who are sufficiently learned to know how to read the classical phrases in the back of the dictionary. Tears are of the past. If Tennyson were alive he would speak of tears in their proper tense.

Tears, idle tears, I know not why they flew,

Let us look back to the time when the author of “The Princess” wrote his immortal lyric. Then, as in the epoch when Goldsmith shocked his world by the brutal ruralities of “The Vicar of Wakefield,” we might weep in public and have no fear. A sob from a box at the theatre in the seventies—fashion patronized the boxes then—while Louise and Henriette were banged about to the music of the Marseillaise—pianissimo—in “The Two Orphans” would have elicited much admiration. And the young lady—everybody was a lady then and not a woman—who had hysterics when Miss Clara Morris uttered

her famous shriek in “Article 47,” made one of the first international marriages. The Duc de B——e adored women of sentiment, and he found one. Gentlemen and ladies who remember Matilda Heron in “Camille” — “The Fate of a Coquette” the play was carefully called in those days—will recall the appearance of the stage and auditorium from the moment of the entrance of Armand’s cruel father until Camille began to fade. Even the ushers came down the aisles and wiped their eyes on their cuffs. It was sometimes impossible to hear Camille’s last dying speech for the sound of the blowing of sympathetic noses. Duse disdains to produce this effect, and even Modjeska seemed startled rather than pleased when the “society people”—the phrase had not been invented then—drew out their silk bandannas and prepared to show emotion in the usual way.

We are informed that the superior morality of the Syndicate has driven the “teary” plays of the seventies from the stage. But, of course, we take this to be one of the fashionable lies of the period, because, as the art of weeping decreases, the art of lying increases. “Frou Frou” and “Fernande” and “La Tentation”—what tears were shed over this play when it appeared in English as “Led Astray”!—have gone simply because ladies and gentlemen obey Balthazar’s advice and weep no more.

Weep no more, ladies, weep no more,
Men were deceivers ever.

Men deceive on the stage today and in real life. Do the ladies weep? No. The age has changed. They are stoical, even at the matinees. And in life they have the love-letters copied by typewriters for future use in the court-

room. Who that has lived in Arcadia, where Louise and Henriette, the heroine of "East Lynne" and "Little Dorrit" let the dewdrops flow into the silver sea of tears, can fail to disdain the arid present? Farce comedy—musical—sometimes draws tears, but that is looked on as an abnormal manifestation of very delicate sentimentalism.

We are more hard-hearted in these days than Robespierre; there were passages in the "New Héloïse" of the teary Rousseau that made him pause for a moment in the signing of a death-warrant; he, too, had feelings, and he wept in public, much acclaimed for his tenderness. A high sentiment—"love is the basis of human government," for instance—could draw tears from the eyes of this friend of the virtues. There were certain romances over which the "sea-green" Marat would weep, as he in his bath was taking his chocolate. And, to go back somewhat further, is it not recorded that Louis XIV., whose dignity was such that the naked eye was dazzled by it, "dropped tears of emotion"? And still further, can anybody believe that, when Mark Antony begged his fellow townsmen to shed tears, that he did not set the example? Alexander the Great let great tears roll down his cheeks, and then, remembering that he had his dignity to maintain, turned his face to the wall and took to drink. We know the rest. Had he been less ashamed of those natural emotions in which the heroes and heroines of history and romance so liberally indulged, Napoleon might never have been in Corsica, and the parents of Bismarck might have been Irish. Thus has the course of events been changed by the retention of tears; for, if Alexander had continued to drop large and manly tears he might, later in life, have been Columbus, as it were, and added a new province to his conquered dominions. But these speculations, far-reaching as they are, seem almost idle now.

How sweetly the great man, Goethe, wept in "The Sorrows of Werther"! Ah, the dear Charlotte! Ah, the tear-stained bread and butter, which

Werther ate because he saw her cutting the romantic loaf! And the venerable Abbé Prévost! What floods of tears he drops on the woes of Manon Lescaut, who, although she was much worse than she should be, was probably much better than many ladies of her time. "I weep," says Madeleine, in a romance of the tender eighteenth century, "I weep because thou lovest me, Maurice; also I believe in the Supreme Being." "I weep also, Madeleine," says Maurice, who has just escaped from his lawful wife, "and also I believe in the Supreme. Let us weep over the birth of love!"

What author would dare to write this exquisite passage now? If Madeleine and Maurice had no sense of humor, they could, at least, weep. We have a sense of humor, but we have bought it at the expense of tears! What statesman would dare to drop a tear publicly in the Senate Chamber? Who has seen our Congressmen weep in public? It is true their secretaries have whispered that they are sometimes moved to tears over their own eloquence in the pages of the *Congressional Globe*. But which of them will come forward and weep so that, as the lover in "The Blessed Damosel," we can hear his tears? Who can tell what the effect of a few tears dropped on the Speaker's table in the House would have? Or a crystal sparkle on a drooping finger at the end of a splendid period by Senator Beveridge? Surely, the signs of emotion which Louis XIV., Alexander the Great—in moderation—and Mark Antony manifested ought not be looked on as infantile by our even great men!

Certain publicists have accused Mr. Rockefeller of every sin that could make the public class him with Caligula, who, it will be remembered, discovered a well of natural gas at Capua, and wished that all the hot air in the world could be collected in that well, that he might set fire to it. Of one thing the censorious have not dared to accuse Mr. Rockefeller. They have shrunk from saying that he

weeps! This, in itself, shows how a national and interesting art has become degraded in the public estimation. We may endure anything but the aspersion of having dropped a tear!

Perhaps the very modern novelists are responsible for this curious condition of the public mind. The sensitive found a tear in every page of "Clarissa Harlowe." Richardson used barrels of tears in his business. And, as to Sterne, who has not wept with Sterne? The dead donkey? You recall the dead donkey? And yet we can see an automobile, a much more delicate creature, go to pieces any day, with dry eyes and not even a convulsive sob. The age of sentiment—delicate sentiment—passed with Burke and the age of chivalry. The early Victorian novelists knew the value of tears. Just before that Mr. Pierce Egan brought the bloody nose and the boxing-glove into fashion; but with Early Victoria he had no alliance. Go back to the "society" novels of the Hon. Mrs. Gore, for example. You forget at once the coldness of a tearless world.

"Ah, *ciel!*" cries Lady Hermantruyde Mannering, in the breakfast room of Monjoie Castle, 'I have bad news. My pet ortolan died yesterday. *Tristesse suprême!*' And the fair creature, who had not touched food since the *déjeuner à la fourchette* of the preceding day, burst into a passion of sobs. Young Lord Hilton felt his own eyes grow moist."

There is a touching scene in "The Exclusives," three volumes, London, 1834, by Lady C——e B——c. Sir Condé Brownscome has proposed to the eldest daughter of the Earl of Chichester:

"*'Mon Dieu,'* softly whispered Lady Ernestine, 'I cannot give you my heart—'tis already engaged. The Duke of Torrentsdale appealed to mama this morning——'

"*'Vie de ma vie!*' exclaimed Sir Condé—using, inadvertently, the ancestral oath of his noble family—'*Vous m'avez donné un coup de pied froid!*' He said this with an air of

aristocratic nonchalance; but a clear, glittering tear showed for a moment in his ebon whiskers, *parfumés de bergomot.*"

And yet this page of beauty is forgotten, with the French—the exquisite social French of the period. The French is found now only in the menu-cards of hotels that keep cooks from Luxembourg. Is there a tear in Jack London? Even Mrs. Humphry Ward, who is the Mrs. Gore, the Mrs. Gaskell, and the Madame de Staël of our time, cannot write this suggestive and refined French or paint a tear. After reading Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Trollope, Lady Morgan and Lady Blessington, "The Casket" for 1840, and "The Ladies' Gem" for '42, one almost doubts that Mrs. Ward knows anything of really good English society. A certain class, of course, she may know; but we discover no traces of her acquaintance with those delicate, refined, sensitive creatures who are probably so exclusive that she has not been permitted to meet them. Mrs. Sinclair and Mrs. Benson, who, we understand, produce light literature—would that we could use the term "polite"—very widely read, have no scenes that can equal in sentiment some of the passages of Balzac's "Lily in the Valley." O Jupiter Pluvius! O Juna Pluvia! The heroine is of a tearfulness which would force moss to grow on a telephone wire! (Thus, in a moment of enthusiasm have I permitted myself to fall in the language of the people; but let it pass). Balzac, it is said, "moistened each page of this heroine's sufferings, as he wrote." Would Mrs. Humphry Ward's press-agent or the multi-millionaire that manages Mr. Kipling's business be rash enough to write this of either of these great, but dry, authors?

In Dumas the fathers and mothers drop many tears. "'Love: My son loves,'" murmurs the Count de Bragelonne at the age of eighty. "'Why do I weep? It is his first love.' An iridescent tear, opaline, yet with luminous lights as of the diamond in it,

fell upon the brow of the slumbering youth. He awoke. 'I still love, but not for the first time,' said the tender father. And they wept together, as the dawn arose over the demesne of Bragelonne."

Every reader will recall the famous passage in the tenth sequel to "La Tour de Nesle," where Queen Marguerite, having been obliged to kill a gentleman who wearied her, recalls the fact that he had given her a rose when they first met. "The queen wept; she was a woman now—no longer a splendid tigress. Those tears redeemed her."

Could even Mrs. Gertrude Atherton, whose audacity is proverbial, imitate that moving statement? Mrs. Freeman, it is safe to say, has not dreamed of depicting a woman whom tears could so transform. And what tears has Octave Thanet found in the Middle West? After all, it may be that women understand the exact value of tears too well to use them at a period when they seem to be valueless even for the watering of stock. We must look to the men writers, on whose susceptibilities they have dropped for ages, to discuss their present market value.

In art—the art of painting, which is dominated by men—the lady of today invariably smiles. She even laughs. For years the Mona Lisa was the only smiling woman in the realms of art. Even Rubens's fat women were pensive; though, having good digestions, they never reached positive melancholy.

You remember, of course, the awful shuddering, inevitable climax of Paul Vigneron de Mac's symbolistic word picture? The young wife, you know, of course suspects her husband, who is an artist. His picture is ready for the Salon. She looks at it; she interprets it at once; it confirms her most terrible fears. "Gaspard," she shrieks, "has painted my tears without fervor!"

Then she goes mad.

When this feuilleton ran in *Le Doyen*, Parisians—sitting at the hour of absinthe in the Boulevards—were seen to weep. Could such a thing happen at Sherry's or Delmonico's or the Café Martin?

The sweet sadness of Greuze is no longer in fashion. Note the tear in the liquid eyes of the girl with the broken pitcher. There are many tears in Greuze, and he once set the fashion. In all the modern portraits even elderly ladies show their teeth very much. You cannot weep and open your mouth. Has the magical American dentist driven the tearful beauty out of the golden frame and the somber shadow box?

Dickens drew heavy cheques on the treasury of tears. The tears that he forced from all classes, if dammed, would supply England with all the water power she lacks. He did for the middle classes what our sweet Mrs. Gore and the ever exquisite Lady C——e B——c did for the *haute volée*—that is an early Victorian, or rather, later, Jimmy Buchananian* phrase. It is only necessary to mention Little Nell, Little Dorrit and Esther and little Paul, *hinc illæ lachrymæ*. You were pumped dry when life was young, but the present hateful fashion makes you grin at the sweet, soulful sentiment of other days! Then you might stuff your handkerchief in your mouth to control your sobs—and excite only sympathy. Thackeray had his part in displacing the pearly drop with the grin; and even Bulwer could not save the tear of the Good, the Beautiful and the True. It is gone! Perhaps the early Victorians overdrew their drafts on the treasury, as I have said. At any rate, one is obliged to admit the bankruptcy of tears.

*The Hon. James Buchanan was once President of the United States, it may be remembered.



TIED

By Arthur Stanley Wheeler

“**M**R. WATERS,” said Cunningham, “will you translate, beginning with the paragraph at the top of page fifty-six?”

Waters, an elongated youth from whose thin neck the collar of a dirty white sweater fell coyly away, gathered his legs beneath him and stood up, sending the seat of his chair up with a bang as he did so. He occupied several seconds by thumbing the leaves of his book, while his classmates shuffled their feet, settled down on the small parts of their individual backs and otherwise made it known that the recitation was about to begin.

“‘So Jean Marie,’” Waters commenced in a sing-song voice, “‘retired to his light——’”

“No, no,” interrupted Cunningham wearily. “*Lit* is not ‘light,’ Mr. Waters, but ‘bed.’ And don’t say ‘retired’; say ‘went to bed.’”

Waters accepted the interruption indifferently and, with trifling assistance, proceeded through half a page of the French classic in which that section of the freshman class was immersed, against its will, three times a week for an hour at a time.

“That will do,” said Cunningham, and Waters sat down abruptly with another bang. “Mr. Sterrett, will you translate?”

Now Sterrett, as it happened, had been depending on the instructor to skip from Waters to the head of the alphabet, and had therefore allowed himself to become inveigled into a riotous game of tit-tat-toe with his neighbor on the right. Indulgence in this diversion had caused him to grow un-

familiar with the progress of the translation, and he began, after much hemming and hawing, at a point some lines in advance of that at which Waters had left off.

“That’s enough,” Cunningham said sharply. “Mr. Koehler, will you go on, provided that you know the place?”

Koehler was a mediocre but conscientious student. He was of Teutonic parentage, but had taken up French with a do-or-die determination to learn it, and could therefore be counted on daily to produce a running translation of comparative accuracy. When he was fairly started Cunningham allowed his own thoughts to wander, for a few minutes, from the French classic to a general contemplation of the long grind of which it was a part.

John Cunningham was himself young, removed from undergraduate life, in fact, by only a few years. To the class before him he seemed a selfless institution, a mere typification of the teaching staff, to be viewed with hostile eyes, and to his superiors he was nothing more than a youthful instructor on probation—one who must be regarded askance until he had proved himself worthy of full membership in their august body; but in reality he was an ordinary young fellow of twenty-five or six, rather brighter than most, but endowed with ordinary feelings, virtues and failings. In his college days he had been a good student and steady; when he graduated, he had been offered a position as instructor in French and Italian at the princely stipend of nine hundred dollars per year. As it chanced, he had been very anxious to marry a girl to whom he had been

engaged for more than a year, and the nine hundred dollars had looked big to him. Imbued with the enthusiastic purpose of combining marriage, teaching and a course of study for a higher degree, he had overridden the objections of his future family-in-law, and, with the support of the girl, who was rendered more or less irresponsible by her love for him, had accepted the position, carried through the wedding and taken up life at Ware in two rooms and a bath, with table-board outside. During the three years following he had held his position, nearly completed his study for the doctorate, got his salary raised to a thousand dollars and achieved a sinking fund of a hundred and fifty in the bank.

Staring through the window of the stuffy, overheated classroom into the waning light of the short February afternoon, Cunningham thought rather bitterly of those three years. It was not unhappiness which provoked the bitterness—the three years had not been exactly unhappy—but reaction from the monotony of small cares and the process of disillusionment. At first he had gone into his teaching with enthusiasm; the classroom work had been a pleasure, and he had thrown off the outside labor—the correcting of exercises, the making up of long lists of marks—easily. The extra toil entailed by his study for a degree had also been accomplished with comparative ease and good will, for it was a means to a definite end.

As for his home life with Helen, that had been glorious—at first. Then with the grim necessity for economy had come the first pinch of the shoe. Neither he nor Helen was exceptionally selfish, but they had both been accustomed to the good things of life in fair proportion, and, when they discovered how many little amusements and indulgences they must forego, friction had ensued. Helen had wept in secret, and Cunningham had turned doggedly to his work for relief. There had been reconciliations, and laughter and readjustments, but the work and the economy had continued.

With time, the work had commenced to wear on Cunningham; what had seemed easy and pleasurable at the start became hard and distasteful as the months went by. His enthusiasm had diminished as he realized, or thought he realized, the insignificance of the result of his labors, and that distrust of the innate desire of the young of the human race for good, which every teacher knows, had got its grip on him. His classroom work had developed into a mere grind, and as for the correcting of exercises the time devoted to it had become a species of purgatory, the more so when he had learned Helen's jealousy of it—and all his other work—because it kept him away from her so much. The doubts had come thick and fast then. Had he been wise, he had asked himself, to bring a girl like Helen into a life so narrow and circumscribed, so bound down to the trough of poverty? Watching her with masked anxiety, he had seen her gallant attempts at gaiety for his sake, all her little concealments and makeshifts, her devices for the cheating of herself and others into the belief that she was rich and satisfied; and the thought of them had gone through him like a knife when he lay awake at night. If she had not met him, he considered a thousand times, she might have married a man who could have given her everything she wanted, everything that was her due. He knew perfectly well that she loved him—had constant evidence of it day by day—but these cares, partly real, partly imaginary, had weighed on him and drawn lines around the corners of his mouth. His work, with the never-ceasing, monotonous toil, had grown more and more unlovely in proportion as its newness wore off, and the accomplishment seemed incommensurate with the labor put forth.

At the beginning of the third year he had taken up his duties almost with hatred, and by the middle of the winter—that long, cold, dark term dreaded by teachers and pupils alike—the only thing that held him to them was the thought of his wife, the flat necessity

of holding a position which would enable him to support her in the future. How could he desert the profession which he had begun to loathe and take up another at a venture when she was dependent on him? He was tied.

What had brought this last thought especially to Cunningham's mind that February afternoon was the receipt of a letter in the morning's mail from his cousin in the West. The cousin wanted him to go out to Seattle and start in the lumber business. The letter stated frankly that the proposition was something of a gamble, but to Cunningham, jaded, harassed, caught and drawn along on the band of the great University machine, a gamble was tremendously attractive. He realized that he could not go, could not run the risk of taking Helen out to Washington on the strength of such an offer, and that realization lent the project added glamour. With the maddening insistence of the tick of a clock heard in the night, there beat against his consciousness the sound of the word Tied! Tied! Tied! . . . A muffled roar came from the direction of the next classroom, and he knew that Vane had been cracking one of his caustic jokes—Vane, most brilliant of the University's younger instructors, whose rise had been rapid and whose cleverness and independence Cunningham had often envied. Vane now, he thought, could have skipped off to Washington without hesitation or a backward glance if he had so chosen.

A snicker from the class before him aroused Cunningham abruptly from his reverie. Koehler, it seemed, had run down and was patiently waiting to be relieved from duty.

"Ah—very good, Mr. Koehler; that will do!" said the instructor, a trifle flurried. "Mr. Fiske, take up the translation where Mr. Koehler left off, and go on, please."

Fiske, a dapper young man of sportive tendencies and a sharp, beady eye, had been watching Cunningham's self-absorption closely, and deemed the moment a propitious one in which to "put up a bluff."

"I answer to you," he began rapidly, "that, on the next day, the good woman had some work to put the tout in his place."

Now the sentence, in French, was: "*Je te responds que, le lendemain, la bonne a de l'ouvrage pour tout remettre en place.*" The initiated among the class emitted a howl, and Cunningham's strained nerves snapped.

"Sit down!" he said. "The class will take the same lesson over again for the next exercise. Your work would be a disgrace to prep. school boys. Recitation dismissed!"

When the class had filed out, amid much stamping and scuffling, he sat for some time at his desk, too tired to move. Then, rousing himself, he put on his hat and ulster, and crossed the windy campus to the library, there to try to forget his troubles in some research work. But, dull and dispirited as he was, he could not bring his mind to bear, with any satisfaction, on the stories of the Romaunt de la Rose; after a futile half-hour, he left the library and took a trolley-car at the corner of Heath and Chestnut streets, with a hazy notion of getting out somewhere into the country, away from the University and all that pertained to it.

He rode to the end of the line, then walked eastward until he found himself under the steep face of Cliff Rock, that jutting inland promontory, last spur of the Green Mountain range, which with its cousin, North Rock, sentinels the town of Ware. These two rocks, too sheer for hills, too small for mountains, form a part of Ware's park system, and in summer the Cliff, threaded by numerous paths and encircled by two broad, winding drives, is a constant haunt of pleasure-seekers. In winter, however, it is all but deserted; the winds sweep over it shrieking, its drives and woods are barren of all save the snow and skeletons of leaves, and its bare, rocky front faces the town like a skull.

The Cliff, in this wintry guise, appealed to Cunningham's humor. Hunching his shoulders, and sinking

his chin below the collar of his ulster, he struck one of the drives, and trudged steadily upward, through the lower belt of woods, toward the black spaces above. Emerging at last upon a natural platform, partly surrounded by a flimsy wooden railing, at the front of the Rock, he came upon a man, in whom he recognized, with surprise, the black slouch hat, attenuated form, and sharp profile of Vane, his fellow instructor. Vane's arms were crossed on the railing and he was staring down, over them, at the little river which wound through the flat meadows a sheer two hundred feet below—staring with so fixed an intensity that he was unaware of Cunningham's approach until the latter laid a hand on his shoulder. Then he turned abruptly, shaking off the hand with a savage snarl which changed to a forced laugh when he saw Cunningham's look of unfeigned astonishment.

"Why, it's Johnny!" he said. "I—I beg your pardon, Johnny; you scared me out of a year's growth. What the devil are you doing here?"

"The same as you, I suppose," returned Cunningham. "Fighting for air."

Vane laughed again, this time with sardonic amusement. "Oho!" said he. "So you feel the bite of the machine occasionally, too, do you? I didn't know you ever got the blues, Johnny. It's hell, isn't it?"

"Something like that," Cunningham agreed. "But I say, Vane, what should a fellow like you be doing with the blues? What have you got to worry about?" He rather resented Vane's assumption of equality in depth of trouble.

Vane backed up against the railing leaning his elbows on it, and Cunningham saw the dark circles under his eyes, the pallor of his lips. "Why not?" he asked grimly. "Why shouldn't I worry? Do I seem to you so very enviable a person?"

"Decidedly," said Cunningham. "You're doing good work, and you've nothing to hinder you, and you're

clever. The condition speaks for itself."

"Clever, am I? Then, if I'm clever, thank God that you're not, Johnny!" Vane swung around on one elbow, and looked off into the fast-darkening distance. "The grind, the grind, the ceaseless grind!" he went on, bitterly. "The classes, and the themes, and the mutton-chop at night, and the eggs in the morning, and the lonely, haggard hours in between." He laughed once more. "You're a married man, Johnny, and I don't suppose you ever feel like that. You've got something to keep you busy in off hours, someone to help you take your mind away from your own sweet self."

It was on Cunningham's lips to make an answer from his heart, but pride, and loyalty to Helen, kept him silent.

"Cosmos, Chaos—Chaos, Cosmos," Vane continued evenly, as though speaking to himself. "What's the difference? And what is reality, and what is a dream? Last night I turned out the gas, lit a candle on my desk, and watched the flame for hours; at the end I didn't know which was the candle, and which myself. . . . An instructor is a dog. Nobody thinks of him as a man, he's only an institution, to be shirked or worked, according as you're below or above him. To hell with teaching!"

"If you feel that way about it," said Cunningham, after a moment, "why don't you pull up stakes and clear out? A man of your brains could easily find something else to do."

"My dear Johnny," Vane answered, "it would be the same for me in any other line of work. The whole world is no more than a mill, grinding men between its upper and nether stones. Moreover, I'm not fit for anything else; the University has sapped my blood and eaten into my bone, until now I'm a shadow, capable only of sliding along in my rut. And I'm tired, so beastly tired of it all! What have I accomplished? What shall I ever accomplish? A professorship, perhaps, and all the petty perquisites and jealousies thereof. What's the

use? I haven't a relative in the world close enough to care whether I fail or succeed, nor a friend about whom I care a snap, or who cares a snap about me. As for myself, I gave up caring a long time ago. What's the use, I say?"

There was silence for a moment. The day had gone, and darkness was fast settling over the land spread out beneath them. Dank vapors, rising from the river and marshy meadow below, mingled with the upper winds and gave a heaviness to their chill. In the dusky town to westward the lights were twinkling; against the last streak of light sky, the dome of the big University auditorium showed distinctly, but with pitiful smallness and impotence, like the shadow of a pin point thrown against a sheet. Vane motioned with his hand.

"Look down here," he said.

Cunningham stepped to the railing and looked down. From the platform the rock fell almost perpendicularly to the lower slopes, its surface broken only by the few stunted fir trees that found a precarious hold for their roots in the crevices and an occasional dull white patch, relic of the last snowfall, remaining unmelted on a narrow ledge.

"Young Dearing killed himself here two years ago," said Vane. "A leap, a fall of a couple of hundred feet, and then—oblivion! I don't suppose he knew what struck him. It looks attractive, doesn't it, Johnny?"

Cunningham, staring down, felt dizziness steal over him, and a fierce, unreasoning desire to clear the railing, and go down, down, as Vane said, to oblivion. Why not? He, too, was tired, weary of the present hardships and of the thought of the future. For perhaps half a minute—which seemed an age—he luxuriated in the notion, feeling in spirit the relief, the nameless and unknowable satisfaction of being free, of hearing the raucous voices of life calling to him in vain as he lay at peace in his coffin, or, better still, of not hearing them at all. Then his reason came back to him with a rush,

and the fetters of his every-day life tightened. He thought, with ridiculous triteness, of the day's exercises to be corrected, of the morrow's work which must be gone through with, of Helen waiting for him at home—Helen, for whose sake he must stay and fight. Laughing abruptly, he turned to Vane.

"Come along, Vane," he said. "It's time to go. We'll be late for supper as it is."

But Vane refused. "Run along home to your wife, Johnny," said he. "I'm going to stay here and see the moon rise."

Cunningham shrugged and started. In spite of hurried walking and good trolley connections, he reached the town too late for supper at the boarding-house, and was forced to content himself with a sandwich and a cup of coffee at a dairy lunch-room. As he settled down over his pile of exercises for an evening's work Helen approached him rather timidly.

"Here are these tickets for the Symphony Concerts, Jack," she said. "Mrs. Guild sent them to us, you remember, and said that we might use them if we cared to."

Cunningham looked up, pencil in hand. "We can't take favors from Mrs. Guild, honey."

"I know. But if we pay her the price of the tickets it will be all right."

"How much are they?"

"Only six dollars."

"There's the insurance to meet, and the rent comes due on the first of the month. Six dollars will help."

"Then you think we ought not to take them?"

"I'm afraid not, dear."

Helen said no more, but Cunningham, knowing her love of music, understood how the refusal hurt her. He turned to his work with a repressed sigh, and toiled doggedly until midnight.

In the morning he awoke to the joy of a neuralgic headache, but went to his work and endured three recitations as best he could, knowing that his instruction was uninspired, and that the boys were getting from him

nothing worth the having. His classes were noisy and restless, and the headache made him more than usually nervous. Little things annoyed him; the breaking of a pencil-point, the clanking of a refractory radiator, the cheers and stamping of the classes of some instructor who had absented himself for the morning. Cunningham cursed that instructor cordially, at heart, without consideration of his identity. What business had he, whoever he might be, to shirk his job and let loose a horde of exultant young Comanches during working hours?

Going to the boarding-house for mid-day dinner, Cunningham applied himself grimly to his food; it was necessary to eat a certain amount, despite headache and nausea, in order to have strength for the afternoon's tussle. The talk of the table flowed around him unheeded. In vain Miss McDougal, the spinster of uncertain years and a wig which looked like an inverted cooking-pot, detailed the symptoms of her latest disease. In vain Mrs. Griggs, the needle-eyed relict of the defunct professor of biological chemistry, recited chastely the most recent titbits of unchaste scandal; and in vain Meikleham, the young-old graduate student who fancied himself a wit, made sprightly stabs at men and matters. At last, however, Miss McDougal, with a sudden inspiration of memory, addressed Cunningham directly.

"Oh, Mr. Cunningham!" she exclaimed. "Do you know anything about Mr. Vane? A lady who lives in the same house with him told me this morning, *quite* in confidence, that he didn't come home at all last night. She happened to be sitting at her front window until very late, and is *quite* sure that he didn't come in. Of course, I wasn't particularly interested, but I thought I'd ask you, as you're a friend of his. Mr. Vane is *so* eccentric!"

"Vane?" said Cunningham wearily. "No, I don't know anything about Vane. I saw him in the afternoon. Perhaps he took a run down to New York." And he held the salt-cellar

poised over his stringy fish, as an especially unsettling wave of sickness gripped him.

Miss McDougal exchanged significant glances with Mrs. Griggs. Then the latter lady pursed her lips and said: "Sidney Vane is exceedingly peculiar—so peculiar that I am surprised at his remaining on the faculty. There are a good many stories afloat about him. Of course, he is a very brilliant young man, but—" And the charitable Mrs. Griggs raised her eyebrows with infinite suggestion.

"'Ook 'im over the ropes; 'e ain't got no friends,'" murmured Meikleham, winking cheerfully at Helen Cunningham.

Cunningham dropped his knife and fork with a clatter; the possible import of the conversation, working through his dulled senses, had reached him with a sudden, horrible chill. His face blanched at the thought, and Helen started toward him.

"What is it, Jack?" she asked breathlessly.

He put her aside gently, and rose from his seat. "Nothing, dear," he said. "Only, I've got to go. I've just thought of something. Please excuse me."

Under Cunningham's leadership, a searching party found Vane's body at the foot of Cliff Rock, not ten feet from the spot at which young Dearing's had been discovered two years before. The news of the suicide spread quickly through the University, and late in the afternoon the dean had an interview with Cunningham.

"It is an unspeakable pity," he said. "An unspeakable pity. Such happenings do not help the University. The whole matter must be hushed up as soon as possible. Do you know anything about Mr. Vane's relatives or friends, Mr. Cunningham? They could tell us nothing at his lodgings, and there was no evidence among his papers. He was something of a recluse, I take it, and you knew him as well as anyone. In fact, you were the last person to see him alive, I believe."

"He had no relatives worth mentioning," Cunningham replied. "He told me so himself. And I suppose his friends were of the usual kind and the usual value common to an instructor at Ware. I shall be glad to take charge of the funeral arrangements if you like, Dean Blythe."

The dean looked somewhat relieved. "We should be glad to have you," he said. "There really seems to be no one else, and we desire to—ah—expedite matters as much as is compatible with the dignity of the University. The burial will be made in the University lot at the cemetery; all other things will be left to your discretion. Of course, we shall give you any help you may need, financial or otherwise."

"That is very good of you," said Cunningham.

The dean waved the tribute aside. "The University feels responsibility for this—ah—lamentable occurrence. Such a brilliant young man! . . . And I may trust to you to keep matters as quiet as possible, Mr. Cunningham?"

Cunningham bowed. "I will hustle him to his grave as soon as may be," he said.

The dean looked shocked.

For the next forty-eight hours, Cunningham was so busy that he did not have time to reflect. He had never been forced to perform these gruesome duties before, and in addition to the actual arrangements, he had to fight off the newspaper men, who flew, like harpies, to the feast of a scandal in collegiate life. It was not until the afternoon of the funeral itself that he found an opportunity for consecutive thinking.

The services were held in the dowdy parlors of the lodging-house in which Vane had made his home, if home it could be called. Besides a few gossips and the delegation from the University, there were not many present. A quartet from the chapel choir did the singing, and an old clergyman, whom years of living under the eaves of the University had in a measure identified with its interests, prayed and made a

stereotyped address. Opposite Cunningham sat the landlady's three children, arrayed in stiff and unwonted collars, staring with eyes made owlsh by the strange solemnity of the occasion. In a corner, Miss McDougal snuffled audibly, and, *sotto voce*, passed comments with Mrs. Griggs on the lack of cleverness which had been displayed in the direction of the proceedings. In the pauses, a clock in the hall made its tick heard with unnatural loudness.

It was all terribly commonplace. To Cunningham, unfamiliar with death, the haste and glibness, the grim reality, seemed indecent. Here was a man gone, suddenly, tragically, out into the Dark, and these people took the matter as smoothly, as evenly, as if a page had been turned in a novel they were reading. All they were anxious about was to get it over as soon as possible! They had no thought of the struggle the man had made before he died, made no allowance for his temptations and the bitterness of his life; to them, according as they were fools or thinkers, Vane was either a freak or a part of the Machine which had failed in its duty. Yonder sat Blair, the president of the University, calm, motionless, with his handsome, deeply lined face set in its habitual mask, and eyes fixed on a picture on the opposite wall. Not far from him was the dean, old and bowed, but equally immobile of expression. These two, Cunningham knew, were thinking, planning, calculating the next step in the eternal grind, oblivious of their surroundings. Vane was nothing to them now; he had served them for a time, but had dropped, incommoding their machinery, and they were filling his place, bridging the gap in the works. Were all men so merciless? Cunningham felt cold fear grip at his spirit. The nearness of the tragedy, the unaccustomed duties of the past two days, and his strained and overworked condition, with all its cares and worries, had unhinged him. In his pain, his eyes searched the circle of cold or

trivial faces, finally came around to that of his wife, and there rested.

Helen was praying. Her face, with its girlish profile, was slightly uplifted, and her lips moved inaudibly. Cunningham watched her with a curiosity which was almost impersonal. He was in no way religious, but he had never interfered, by word or deed, with Helen's observance of her faith. Previously he had regarded her religious rites with negligent indulgence; now, however, something in her bearing arrested his attention. Whence did she get this calmness, this aloofness from the horrible and the tawdry, this ability to shake off even the commonplace?

Her features, so well-known, seemed suddenly unfamiliar, and Cunningham, watching her, felt more alone, more desolate than before. Even as this last desolation pervaded him, however, Helen's hand, groping unnoticed at his side, touched his sleeve, and the fingers closed over the cloth with an unconscious insistence which was partly that of the child, appealing to its accustomed support, partly that of the woman, claiming her mate. Under the hand, Cunningham's nerves quieted unaccountably; the pressure seemed to link him once more with the humanity of the world, and, through his wife's body, with the Infinite itself. He sat passive, unreasoning, but at peace, to the end of the services.

They followed Vane's body to its grave in the bleak, winter-smitten cemetery, and stood while the old minister droned the last formula over the clay. A light, persistent snow had commenced to fall, and the white drift settled on the coffin and on the

black-clad shoulders of the circle of mourners, lending an added touch of shrouded gloom to the scene. But from Cunningham, the sadness and hopelessness of months were strangely slipping, as he stood by his wife's side and looked down at Death. Helen's form leaned against him, and her hand was in his. Recoiling from the horror which had come so close to him, and repelled by the coldness of the world, he turned for comfort to his own, and the comfort was not lacking. From the very cause, as he had thought, of the worst of his troubles and anxieties, he got the human warmth that put new life into him, and the discovery made him square his shoulders and draw the source closer.

"Oh, Jack," said Helen, as they left the cemetery. "What do all the work and sorrow matter, so long as we've got each other? Let's start over again, and remember how much better off we are than most people, instead of how much worse. Will you?"

"Agreed," said Cunningham, pressing her hand. He couldn't seal the compact as he wished to, there in the open street.

They walked to the end of the long cemetery wall, and when they turned away at the corner, Helen said, reflectively:

"I wonder whether poor Vane would have killed himself if he had had anyone who really cared about him?"

"I wonder," Cunningham said.

But as he cast a last glance back toward Vane's grave, he amended, in thought, the words of the English churchman:

"There, but for the love of a woman, lies John Cunningham."



STUCK UP

"IS Jack very much stuck-up since he bought that fast auto?"
 "Oh, yes—with courtplaster."

THE BETROTHAL BUREAU

By Pomona Penrin

BERENGER liked the look of the room into which he was shown. It had no uncomfortable chairs, no polished surfaces, no portly bric-a-brac. There was a low hum of contented talk and that pleasant air of vague expectation which seasons the atmosphere of the ten minutes before dinner. All the world loves that moment when something is about to happen, whether it be dinner, or the first act, or the next chapter.

Mrs. Gilver, his hostess, permitted him to approach the sofa where she was seated. Mrs. Gilver would not have advanced to meet anyone of younger years or of the other sex, though she were ten times a hostess; instead she sat upon a divan and extended a languid hand glittering with a veritable gauntlet of gems. Berenger had sometimes wondered what would become of Mrs. Gilver's personality if her wealth were suddenly to disappear. She had so much wealth, such an armor of jewels, such a host of superficial interests from tea to tenements—and so little personality. Mrs. Gilver receiving one in a shabby dark frock in a lodging-house parlor would have been almost indistinguishable from her surroundings. But the amber divan, and her embroidered gown, and the chamber of comfortable chairs and unpolished surfaces—these were a background which sharpened her colorless languor into positive hostess-ship.

"Ah, Philip," she said, "this was so good of you. We shall do our best to amuse you, in our poor little American way. Whom do you not know? You must have known us all in the old day. We do not change. We have a mania

for retaining our friends. Here is Edith, charmed to welcome you back. Veronica will have spoken to you of our Miss Hawthorne—our dear Miss Hawthorne, whose delightful voice has charmed all those who——"

So she went vaguely on, saying any number of incoherent things, and behaving quite as if Berenger, lately returned from three or four years in Java and Malta and other places which it bored him even to remember, were hopelessly out of touch with all things American. Berenger returned the flattering murmur of greeting from those whom he knew, and caught at the name of those whom he did not, and hoped that the eleven now present would make up the dinner party. A dinner of more than twelve became, Berenger thought, a kind of banquet at which one always glanced up at the walls in search of boxes to be occupied by one's wives and daughters, so to speak, during the toasts. And all the while he was wondering where Veronica could be.

Veronica entered as he wondered, and became the twelfth. It amused him to speculate upon Mrs. Gilver's attitude had she known that, during his absence in Java and Malta and thereabouts, he had thought far more about her daughter Veronica than his prospects would seem to warrant. And when, only a month ago, he had reached London to find those prospects changed and golden, he had lost no time in arriving in New York, and lifting the Gilvers' knocker, and accepting an instant invitation to dine the evening after. This was the evening after; and rapturously, when they had trailed

downstairs and through the halls, Berenger found as they took their places at table that Veronica was upon his left. Upon his right was Miss Hawthorne—the Miss Hawthorne of Mrs. Gilver's eulogy. But that, it must be admitted, mattered considerably less than nothing; for upon his left was Veronica.

It seemed to Berenger as he looked down at her that she was troubled. She was exquisitely beautiful in a gown scattered with glistening tracers, and her attention to the stout poet—that anomaly of Nature—who had taken her down was perfect; but Berenger, who had been wont in the old days to know Veronica's moods by the very way she was coiffured, knew instinctively that she was troubled. In the lull when—having delivered himself of some witticism concerning our first parents' first dinner and its evolutions—the stout poet was applying himself to his soup, of the rhythm of whose ingredients he appeared convinced, Berenger spoke to Veronica; for Miss Hawthorne had just broken her engagement to one of the other guests and was so abstracted that Berenger was almost unattached.

"What is it?" he said to Veronica.

"Do I look owlsh?" asked Veronica, in soft alarm. "No—please, I don't. Besides, I was thinking of nothing. Did you learn second sight in an Asiatic province? Don't tell me there is a blue-green light about my head!"

"I never needed an Asiatic province," protested Berenger, "to know when you were unhappy. I always guessed, exasperatingly. You once told me that it was shocking form to guess, so I abandoned it. Now I ask instead. So what is it? What is troubling you?"

Veronica made sure that the poet was still earnestly engaged.

"Once," she said with an enchanting air of confidence, "we had a cook whom a friend of mother's imported from the Society Islands. Mother, I think, fancied that the name of the islands would do for the cook's reference. But the man told us later that he had been born in Trivandram, in

British India, and that he was a philosopher. Among his philosophies was that when one talked he could see colors issuing from one's mouth—yes, really—depending on one's disposition and character and so on. Green was evil and yellow was facile and blue was beauty—I fancy that the man made them up according to his personal taste in the spectrum. When mother reprimanded him he always shrank back, his eyes immovably fixed upon her mouth, and mother would suddenly become conscious that she was breathing out green speeches, and would ask him to leave the room. It was too delicious. When one praised his salads and his sauces he always murmured: 'Ze heaven sky, ze heaven sky'—and in the end we were all so embarrassed by trying to talk blue and pink shades that we sent him away and went down on our knees to an agency. The next cook——"

"Don't," said Berenger gravely, "unless you really don't wish me to ask. But I used to be able to help. I once mended an orange dove in a Noah's ark for you—is this worse?"

Veronica turned to him suddenly.

"Did you know," she asked, "that Miriam Hawthorne has broken her engagement to Spencer Orme?"

"Ah, well now," objected Berenger, "since I haven't heard from Orme in three years and since I now, tonight, first learn of the existence of Miss Hawthorne—how could I know? But say that I did know—I think it was in the air up in the salon—what then? Since it manifestly cannot be that that troubles you?"

"Ah, but it is!" protested Veronica. "Not that—but the principle."

"The—?" questioned Berenger.

"Yes, the principle," explained Veronica. "I suppose that, since the world began, there never have been two so perfectly suited to each other as Miriam and Spencer. Everyone knows it. We all said so the instant that they were engaged. Anyone can see that they were meant for each other—anyone, that is, but Miriam and Spencer themselves. It's queer about that,

Philip. And the helplessness of their friends, in such a case, is really frightful."

On Veronica's left the stout poet showed signs of life as the plates were taken away. Berenger heard him address her with some word about the sunset shades in the candle-wax and the moon colors in their crystal standards. Berenger looked at the candelabrum and began a silent reflection on the exact line which divides the bad taste of expressing an opinion from the bad taste of making a too-ecstatic comment, and he did not find the line. He said something to Miss Hawthorne, and heard her answer courteously to something that he did not say, and he began a silent reflection upon the line which divides the bad taste of wearing one's heart upon one's sleeve from the bad taste of not having a heart, and the line eluded him. When the poet's opinion was languorously demanded by Mrs. Gilver, Berenger eagerly sued for Veronica's attention.

"What would you suggest?" he asked, which is the question above questions in which a woman delights. And miraculously Veronica remembered what she had last said, and took up the thread of the talk. Berenger had a devout admiration for the woman who can keep up a delicate interrupted flow of talk with the man upon her right at dinner; he regarded this grace as a chief qualification of a woman to be a dinner guest. She must not only talk with the required brilliancy and sympathy with the man upon her left, she must talk with perfect though intermittent unity with the man upon her right. The man who had given her his arm was the major motif; but the minor must be no less discerningly and delicately sustained.

Veronica answered: "How can you expect a reformer to see a remedy as well as an abuse? Yet, really, I have an idea. We are all so ridiculous about our friends' engagements. We give them advice about becoming colors and morals, but if we advise

them about their engagements we feel ourselves in bad taste. So, instead, we take their confidences and are sure that they are wrong, and say not a word. And I don't know that we could say so much, either," said Veronica perversely, "but we don't do enough. We don't try to bring the people together who ought to be brought together. We sit back comfortably and watch the spectacle and call our own neglect the workings of Destiny. Think of the unaccomplished engagements that are largely our fault. We don't help each other enough."

"Help each other to—to be engaged?" asked Berenger, "or help ourselves to be engaged?" he put it hopefully. "Because, if it's that I could——"

"No," disclaimed Veronica tranquilly, "other people. I——"

"Would you like me to help you to be engaged?" suggested Berenger brightly; "believe me, nothing could give me greater——"

"You haven't the good of society at heart," Veronica reproached him gravely; "you are thinking only of yourself."

Berenger admitted ruefully: "Yes, if I were to ask anyone to marry me I confess that it would look like a reckless disregard of that person's happiness. But if you would let me try——"

"Aren't you interested in knowing what I mean?" asked Veronica with adorable hauteur.

"Before all things," he answered simply.

She waited long enough to hear the poet saying trenchant nothings to which his end of the table listened, responding in little applauding gusts of soft laughter. So long as his sentences had brevity and contradicted everything that everyone else believed, they were assumed to riot in wit. And the poet was witty; at least, no one's verses were so sad as his, so the presumption was fair.

"I'll explain," said Veronica; "first, let me ask you: Do you think that there is a human being—I mean of

course a social being—who does not know one or two—ah, dozens!—who ought to have met and who never did?”

Berenger considered.

“Ah, well now,” he objected, “don’t most of us meet far too many?”

“Far too many of the wrong sort,” consented Veronica, “precisely. You have made my point. And if I were to look the world over and pick out its greatest need I don’t think that need would be the instant solution of things that will solve themselves. It would be—would it not?—bringing people together who ought to be brought together and who with inferior intelligence proceed to make a mess of things when they are left to themselves.”

“Match-making?” demanded Berenger aghast.

“That is unworthy a man of imagination,” said Veronica gravely. “You might as well call bon-bons ‘store-candy,’ and expect me to cease to love them.”

“Is the flavor in the name?” mused Berenger. “The flavor often is in the name,” he assented, “in the name only. What would you suggest?”

The talk was undulating about an admirable turbot, and the poet was talking politics, upon which he liked to be thought an authority. “The law is such a poetical thing,” he was wont to observe.

“It was at a dinner at Mrs. Alpine’s,” explained Veronica, “that the idea came to me. Mr. Orlean took me in. With the oysters he asked me if I cared about butterflies. With the soup he broached talk about mollusks and their habits. He let the fish go away untasted while he went on about the instincts of the migratory birds. He seemed actually to have been patrolling the universe in search of a woman for whom that universe was bounded by butterflies, bugs and birds. He proved to be some kin of mother’s, and he was so learned that she often invited him to her evenings—it is well to make the social sandwich of a professor laid neatly between a clubman and a lion. Thus

Fate had thrown him directly at me—at me, who talk no more frequently of these things than of the ways of Vikings and Vandals. And yet mother’s last social secretary—not this one, whom I believe to be a modiste’s assistant in disguise, come expressly to copy mother’s toilettes—but the last one was young, pretty, possible, and the walls of her rooms were covered with butterflies, her books were all about insects, and the birds of North America came to her two by two to be presented. What could have been more opportune if only—if only she had not at that moment resigned to marry a man who manufactures moth-balls, and whose notion of the animal kingdom was therefore confined! And yet, it needn’t have happened that way. After all, it was our fault for not having sooner taken up Mr. Orlean!”

“Ah, Jupiter,” said Berenger devoutly; “this—this is not wearing philanthropy like a mantle. It is reducing it to the fineness of hand-embroidered robes, from Vienna.”

“And so,” continued Veronica serenely, “I intend to go unobtrusively about helping people, Philip. And I want to help Miriam and Spencer first. And I want you to help—with Spencer.”

“Does he like butterflies and so on?” asked Berenger.

“No, but he must like something,” assumed Veronica. “And Miriam has been busy at her flirtation with him and then at making sure that he was in love with her, so that she never has had time to study his tastes—really. I daresay it is quite the same with him. It’s the way with a lot of engaged people. They are so occupied with love-making that they never trouble to discover each other’s tastes. Really, I sometimes think that all weddings are the triumphs of the way things seem over the way they are. Don’t look at me with Asiatic scorn. I am not in the least cynical, for I believe that this needn’t be so. And I intend to help when I can.”

“I’ll help too,” promised Berenger

obediently. If this were Veronica's way of making the dinner interesting to him, she was succeeding, he reflected. He could hardly take her seriously; yet privately he was wondering whether, if Veronica were suddenly to develop a taste for chairs upholstered in the backs of man-eating tigers, he would not engage a state room and hire an elephant and do his best.

They were at the *entrée* before he found Veronica free again. In the meantime he had attempted a word or two to Miss Hawthorne, and had succeeded in carrying forward ten minutes of the usual dinner-table considerations and had taken sides upon matters of such slight moment as people meditate upon when they are alone, in street-cars. He recalled a dinner in Hong Kong at which he had discussed through five courses the probable number of petals in the *Gloire de Dijon* roses of the center-piece, and of the roses in the embassy gardens, and of all roses in general. Miss Hawthorne was charming—if one means the way one uses one's eyebrows when one smiles. She was extremely pretty; she even told a story with enchanting gravity; but Berenger yearned for the pointed comment and swift, reliable retort of Veronica.

"A witty woman," he reflected, "is a curse to her women friends. They all seem sounding paste and tinkling trinkets beside her—or whatever that ought to be."

"Go on about the betrothal bureau," he pleaded to Veronica when he could; "how do you mean about this—this mission? Shall you have a board of directors and weekly meetings? Shall you have your name on a groundglass door, and advertise in the backs of all the magazines? Will the candidates know that they are the patients, the subjects, the clients, the victims—how would one call them—and is any one eligible?"

"I shall not tell you," said Veronica with dignity; "you see," she went on with pretty disregard of her threat, "it would be like this, Philip: For example, one always knows by instinct whom to

send to whom with letters of introduction—one never quite knows how one knows, but one knows. And one always knows whom to ask to dine with whom—that is pure instinct also. To look on at the social game is to understand the social attractions and repulsions far better than the people understand them themselves. It is like watching a chess game. An indifferent player looking on will see mistakes that two expert players are about to make when the two players themselves will be unconscious. To get too near a thing is to warp one's vision and one's judgment. And engaged people are always far too near the tremendous fact of their own engagement really to judge each other until it is too late. Other people always see their mistakes—don't you remember how, when Roland Norris and Patty were married, everyone gave them a year to be separated? And in less than two years they were actually divorced. So with Katherine and Barry George—people sat at the very wedding feast and prophesied the end—and in a few months he was shooting lions at the South Pole, or wherever they go, and he's there now. I need not multiply instances—you know as many as I do; everyone knows them. And every one was afraid to say one word to those four people. I was, too. We all told each other the facts and shrugged and said: 'But what is the use? You can't make them see.' And my theory is, Philip, that we *can* make people see if we use tact. Clever women lead dinner-table talk, influence politics, marry their daughters—why should they not just as delicately use their social experience to modify the most important thing in the world—betrothals? We all have human intelligence, even when we are in love."

"How do you know that?" demanded Berenger darkly.

"Because I've human intelligence even though I'm not in love," returned Veronica imperturbably. "What do you think of my theory? Do you agree with me?"

"Abjectly," replied Berenger. "I am prepared to be a slave to un-

betrothed society. After dinner I shall button-hole Spencer and prove to him— By the way," he broke off, "you are certain to be right about those two, I suppose? Perhaps the Bureau ought to keep them apart, now? How can you be sure?"

"Ah, they are eminently suited," reiterated Veronica, "quite eminently. Those things are intangible, but one is sure."

"Just so," confirmed Berenger; "I observe that neither of them takes dessert. In these days it is only necessary that two discover that they take their tea alike, or prefer brown butter to salad oil, and behold—the aim of Cupid is perceived to be exact!"

"That," accused Veronica gravely, "is your Asiatic cynicism. Tell me what you really mean to say to Spencer? I must see whether you will make a proper partner."

"But I suppose the world," insisted Berenger, "could not contain the reasons why I should be your partner."

"For the Bureau," finished Veronica, meeting his eyes.

"For the Bureau," finished Berenger meekly. "Ah, well now," he went on in a moment, "suppose I were to use a fine diplomacy and to begin, for example, by asking Spencer how he delights to spend his evenings?"

"Yes," said Veronica with attention, "and then—?"

"Then," went on Berenger encouraged, "he'll say—what will he say? What would you say if you were asked that?"

"Ah, but I," said Veronica, "am no standard, Philip. Do you know I think I was never meant to be young? The pleasures and pursuits of middle-life suit me far better—yes, really. I can imagine myself perfectly, with travel and society behind me, living quietly somewhere with books and a bit of water and a pony cart."

"Really?" said Berenger. "But do you know that nights, when I sat

smoking out on a pagan deck somewhere, watching the Southern Cross—that sort of thing used to be precisely what I found myself looking forward to!"

Veronica, totally unimpressed by the coincidence, pursued:

"I get on far better with middle-aged people. I think I began middle-aged."

"And I like," agreed Berenger, "to think that I did, too, and that is how I happen to be middle-aged now. But I adore youth in other people—and yet I shall love them more and more, Veronica, when middle-age really comes to—them."

"Them!" murmured Veronica. "It sounds positively polygamous. And what else will you say to Spencer?" she wanted to know.

"Ah, well," said Berenger, "I shall talk on vaguely about happiness, I dare say, and finally ask him what his idea of happiness is. What would you say to that—if you were Spencer?"

He was looking down at Veronica contentedly. Her hands were so perfect that to watch her break her roll was like seeing any other woman gathering violets.

"Ah," said Veronica reproachfully, "that is the universal signal for everyone to be witty. Don't you know how people always promptly answer absurd things—bon-bons, the right sort of dinners, a yacht, an auto, orchids every morning—people are never so idiotic as when they are asked to give their idea of happiness. But I think—do you know—there is something that I've always imagined for myself—but I've never seen a place like it, and I don't quite know what suggested it in the first place, but I'm always recalling it—it's a broad white veranda," she said, "and of course anybody can have that. There are lots of rugs and chairs—and it's at twilight—and the doors are open, and things are budding in a big, big garden—and someone is playing—away off in another corner of the house, and I think it is almost

dinner-time. And I am there—all alone, and something—I don't know quite what it is, but something heavenly, is just about to happen. Isn't that a stupid idea of happiness? But I've had it over and over—and always that sense of something glorious just going to happen."

"If, as you say, it were about dinner-time," suggested Berenger modestly, "isn't it probable that it might be I coming up the drive—home?"

"You are impossible," said Veronica at this, flushing.

"Ah, that little house of mine up in Westchester," went on Berenger eagerly. "I've always thought I'd like to get back to it—I thought that any number of times—with everything just right, of course. I remember once, in India, I nearly took the next boat back to ask you—the veranda is gray," he went on, "but we can have it white in a week. And rugs and chairs are not infeasible, and we can leave all the doors wide open if you say so, and somebody can play in another corner of the house—so long as he stays there—and things can bud in the garden all the year round—and there can be dinner!" finished Berenger triumphantly, "and twilight—twilight is an easy matter. Don't you think——?"

"You were to practice talking to Spencer," protested Veronica feebly.

"Talking to him! We can convince him!" said Berenger radiantly. "What's the use of talking to him when we can set before him an example like ours? Sweetheart, if you knew——"

Above the melodious tinkle of the silver and the laughter, the suave, level voice of Mrs. Gilver reached Berenger's ear.

"Oh, Mr. Berenger," she said, "what was the most—really, the most, you know—thrilling thing that happened to you while you were away? These returned travelers! How dare they appear before us without an adventure? What happened, or what nearly happened? Or what didn't

happen that might have happened? We poor stay-at-homes wish to be amused."

Berenger turned to her, his face betrayingly happy.

"Mrs. Gilver," he said—without being certain whether he was in the least coherent, "the most delightful thing that has ever happened to me, Asiatically speaking, was to turn my back on the entire continent and dine with you."

"Ah, but really," breathed Mrs. Gilver, "that is disingenuous of you, surely. Aren't temples and kangaroos and so on more exciting than we are? Tell me—didn't you even have a Hindoo what's-this-it-is read your mind and your future? And whatever did he say?"

Berenger laughed softly.

"I think one did," he admitted, "but it was very confused. The most that I remember was about a white veranda and rugs. He said something about twilight and things budding in a garden, and something glorious, heavenly, about to happen. It is hard to reproduce the effect of these things, but I assure you it was satisfactory."

"That's what they all say!" cried Mrs. Gilver, "I remember how once in Lucknow——"

Thereafter the talk flowed about Veronica and Berenger again, and left them virtually alone. He was thrilled by her silence—it was like permission to him to say the next word. He met her look just as Mrs. Gilver was preparing to give the signal to rise.

"Is it coming true?" he asked.

"True?" asked Veronica perversely—but her voice was a bit tremulous, too, and the stout poet was very far from her thoughts.

"The something glorious, heavenly—that was about to happen," he said, "that veranda—and you—and I coming up the drive—home?"

With Mrs. Gilver's signal they rose, the women with soft rustling of soft skirts. And, Miss Hawthorne being miraculously appealed to by their

host, Berenger, totally oblivious of the stout poet, touched in place Veronica's chair, and waited breathlessly.

"The veranda," said Veronica, "would be an adorable setting for the Bureau."

Berenger's hand met hers as he gave her her gloves, and his eyes explained matters to the entire table, if they had troubled to look.

"Dearest!" he murmured as she passed him. Heavens, he told himself, what a heathen custom for men to sit over their cordials!

"Still, the Bureau is a good idea, isn't it?" said Veronica, pausing rosily. "Say that it is!"

"It is—it is," declared Berenger

devoutly. "Look what it has done for us!"

"What about Miriam and Spencer?" she asked doubtfully as they reached the door.

"We'll ask them up to Westchester to spend a week in April," he told her serenely. "Shall we?"

She said: "But this is March."

"Think of society," he pleaded, "waiting for the Bureau to tidy up the world!"

"Ah, yes, I know," she relented.

"Shall we ask them for April?" he had time for as she passed the portière.

"Yes, April," she assented from the hall.



THE UNDERLAND

By Isabel Moore

DEEP is the mystery of the Underland.

"The air is gentle as the breath of love,
And winter is unknown.

The sun is radiant, yet never withers,

And stars dance in the breeze;

While birds, like wingèd flowers,

Come and go in sweet inconsequence

From bough to bough.

At sunset those who love do find each other;

Youth is their dear companion:

Death himself is dead."

So spake Chief Opaleéta, brought back to life
By those who wished him well but did him ill.

And often now at sunset-time, when all the waiting world
Is filled with pictures, do the people of his tribe

Seek in the limpid waters of the lake

A glimpse of that long-cherished dream, the Underland.

Yet see they little, for their time is not yet come.

LETTRES INTIMES

By Paul Ginisty

LA surprise de M. Albin Fortier fut assez grande quand, après un coup de sonnette où un homme moins ingénu que lui eût senti, déjà, quelque nervosité, il se trouva, ayant ouvert la porte de l'appartement, en face d'une jeune femme d'une discrète élégance, en sa toilette sombre.

Elle entra, visiblement bouleversée par une émotion profonde, et l'étonnement de M. Fortier s'accrut lorsqu'il vit que, connaissant les êtres, c'était elle qui le précédait. Elle pénétra ainsi jusqu'au cabinet de travail, naguère si avenant, si gai, si fantaisiste en son pittoresque désordre, et qui, maintenant, trahissait la sévérité d'un inventaire méthodique. Elle jeta un regard navré autour d'elle, et, tombant dans un fauteuil, éclata en sanglots.

M. Albin Fortier la considéra un moment, fort embarrassé. Bien qu'il prêtât généralement assez peu d'attention aux grâces féminines, il ne put point ne pas remarquer, quand elle souleva sa voilette pour essuyer ses yeux, que cette manifestation d'une vive douleur ne l'empêchait pas de rester jolie et que ses larmes coulaient sur un visage plein de charme.

Cependant, elle releva la tête, essayant de se ressaisir.

— Je vous demande pardon, monsieur, dit-elle. En me retrouvant ici, chez lui, je n'ai pu me contenir... ce pauvre Maurice... cet affreux accident... cette fin tragique!...

M. Fortier soupira, la lamentable vision de ce mort défiguré par des blessures profondes, étendu sur un misérable lit d'auberge, se représentant à lui, avec horreur. Il balbutia quelques re-

merciements, non sans qu'un peu de curiosité, toutefois, lui vint de cette sympathie si chaleureusement exprimée...

— Oui, c'est bien affreux! murmura-t-il; car il n'avait pas beaucoup de facilité à rendre par des mots les sentiments qu'il éprouvait le plus vivement.

Une nouvelle crise de larmes secoua la jeune femme. Puis elle fit appel à tout son courage:

— Vous excuserez ma démarche, monsieur, quand je vous aurai fait une nécessaire confession...

Mais, ayant regardé avec plus d'attention le petit homme grisonnant, un peu solennel, avec sa redingote trop large, bien qu'il y eût je ne sais quoi d'inoffensif et d'effacé dans toute sa personne, elle hésita, soudain, un instant:

— C'est bien au frère de Maurice?...

— Oui, madame, c'est bien à M. Albin Fortier, inspecteur de l'enregistrement à Mézières, que vous avez l'honneur... le veux dire... que j'ai l'honneur... enfin, c'est moi...

Les circonstances de cette conversation imprévue ajoutaient à sa timidité naturelle, et il s'embrouillait un peu. Il reprit pourtant, avec modestie, que son âge et son aspect avaient peut-être quelque chose de déconcertant, et il reprit:

— J'étais son aîné de beaucoup... Nous avons suivi des carrières bien différentes... Il avait une nature d'artiste... Je suis resté un provincial... Mais je l'aimais beaucoup... Cette atroce dépêche, tout à coup, cette catastrophe... J'ai eu bien du chagrin.

Elle lui tendit la main d'un geste spontané et charmant:

— Je sais, dit-elle, quelle affection Maurice avait pour vous... Il m'avait parlé de ce grand frère, sérieux et raisonnable...

Elle reprit, comme si elle se décidait à un aveu :

— Je suis Mme Meillery... Mme Marthe Meillery...

M. Albin Fortier s'inclina, de plus en plus troublé. Ce nom ne lui rappelait rien; mais il avait conscience de sa gaucherie, qui le paralysait coutumièrement, et il eut peur de mal répondre à la confiance qui lui était gracieusement témoignée en demandant quelques éclaircissements. Avec la sorte d'innocence qu'il avait gardée, vivant d'une vie étroite et familiale, en sa petite ville rarement quittée, il ne comprenait nullement, d'ailleurs, l'objet de cette visite.

— J'ai appris que vous étiez à Paisr, dit Mme Meillery, pour les tristes devoirs qu'implique la succession de Maurice... et je suis venue à vous...

— Je suis, en effet, ici depuis deux jours, fit M. Fortier, stupéfait de cette parfaite connaissance de ses actes.

Mme Meillery constata qu'il n'avait pas perdu de temps, et qu'il apportait dans ses classements ses habitudes rigoureuses de vieux fonctionnaire. Sur un meuble s'étaient des chemises de papier fort, déjà étiquetées. Elle eut un petit frémissement. Cette pièce qu'elle se rappelait si encombrée et si vivante, avait pris déjà un aspect froid, par un rangement trop positif. On sentait que la mort avait passé par là...

Avec un frisson, Mme Meillery se souvenait de la dernière fois où elle était venue là, il y a deux mois, avant son départ pour la campagne, et de toutes les gentilleses de Maurice, si séduisant quand il voulait l'être, promettant de trouver un moyen, fût-ce avec un peu d'imprudance, de la rencontrer pendant cette période de séparation, qu'il ne pouvait supporter.

— Si vous saviez, dit-elle, dans quelles atroces conditions, j'ai appris la mort de Maurice!... Voyez-vous, j'ai cru devenir folle... Ce jour-là, des amis

étaient venus dîner à la villa; nous étions nombreux!... On était sur la terrasse, on riait, il faisait un temps délicieux, on était très gai... Le soir tombait doucement... Je ne sais quelles histoires paradoxales on contait, en attendant le moment de se mettre à table... L'un de nous, en se balançant dans un fauteuil d'osier, prit un journal qui traînait, et dont on n'avait pas ouvert la bande: on avait fait une longue promenade, le facteur était arrivé au moment où on partait, et on n'avait regardé que les lettres... Il parcourut rapidement la première page, puis la seconde.

— Rien de nouveau? lui demanda-t-on.

— Rien, répondit-il avec indifférence.

— Si, reprit-il, encore un accident d'automobile... Diable! Sérieux, celui-là... La voiture, voulant éviter une charrette, jetée contre un mur... Deux victimes: le mécanicien, blessé grièvement, et un M. Maurice Fortier, tué net.

— Maurice Fortier? dit un autre, connais pas.

— Mais si, fit quelqu'un en allumant une cigarette; nous avons dû être d'un même cercle—

Mon mari s'était approché. Maurice lui avait été présente, il l'avait entrevu quelquefois:

— Fortier?... Tiens!... Le pauvre garçon!

Et, assujettissant une fleur à sa boutonnière, il ajouta:

— Ah ça, quand dîne-t-on? Nous mourons de faim...

Et moi?... Moi, je demeurais comme hébétée, je restais là, anéantie... Je sentais seulement de grands coups aux tempes... Les larmes ne me venaient même pas aux yeux... Je répétais seulement à part moi:

— Maurice... Maurice...

Puis, brusquement, je compris que j'allais tomber, je me traînai hors de la terrasse, je me réfugiai dans une petit salon, où il faisait déjà nuit, je me roulai, éperdue, sur un divan... Mais on m'appela gatement, on allait venir... Ah! ce dîner, où il fallait feindre d'é-

couter la conversation, de s'y mêler, de sourire... En mes angoisses, j'attendais des questions devant lesquelles j'eusse été désarmée, à ce moment... Comment les heures passèrent-elles?... J'entendais toujours une voix qui me disait:

— Maurice... Maurice...

Le ciel préserve qui que ce soit d'un supplice pareil!... Enfin, dans ma chambre, seule, une effroyable crise de nerfs.... Là, du moins, je pouvais pleurer... Ah! si les morts peuvent nous voir, Maurice aura su mon désespoir...

M. Albin Fortier ouvrait de grands yeux. Il s'empêtra dans des commencements de phrases où il voulait mettre de la sympathie, bien qu'il gardât encore un peu de trouble à la pensée de ces existences agitées, dont il était si éloigné, et il ne trouva, enfin, que ces mots:

— Je... Je vous remercie beaucoup.

Mme Meillery s'exaltait...

— Nous nous sommes tant aimés! dit-elle... C'était coupable, soit! Mais la profondeur de notre tendresse rachetait la faute... Un tel amour était au-dessus des conventions sociales... Nous ne vivions que l'un pour l'autre... avec quelles fièvres, avec quels transports, avec quelles joies de sacrifice!... Maurice était devenu toute ma vie... J'étais sûre de lui, je le possédais tout entier... Ah! nos enthousiasmes, nos tristesses, la douceur anxieuse de nos rêves, de nos désirs!... Deux natures humaines vibrèrent-elles déjà à ce point d'une même âme?... Il y a des histoires célèbres qui, je vous assure, ne valent pas la nôtre... Il n'était pas une de ses pensées que je ne connusse, tant la communauté de nos cœurs était étroite!... Chez lui, tout attestait l'absorbante, l'unique préoccupation de notre amour... Ah! monsieur, je puis le dire avec orgueil en ma douleur!... Peu de femmes ont été adorées comme je l'ai été par Maurice...

M. Fortier demeurait abasourdi de ce lyrisme.

Mme Meillery, après ces instants de surexcitation, releva, d'un doigt léger, sa voilette, rajusta une boucle de che-

veux, passa la main sur ses yeux, parut reprendre possession de soi-même.

— J'avais, dit-elle, écrit à Maurice beaucoup de lettres... Je viens vous les redemander... Ces pauvres épaves d'un temps heureux, je n'ai plus qu'à les détruire... Sans doute, vous les avez déjà trouvées?...

Malgré sa tristesse, M. Fortier en venait à se sentir flatté de ce rôle de confident de grandes aventures sentimentales. Il se dirigea vers un petit secrétaire, qui était resté ouvert.

— J'ai, fit-il, en prenant un air mystérieux, qui lui parut opportun, essayé une classification, parmi des papiers de tout ordre... Naturellement, je ne me suis pas permis de lire ce qui semblait avoir un caractère trop particulier...

Il ajouta ingénument:

— Je n'aurais pas encore eu le temps, d'ailleurs...

Il ouvrit un dossier, sur lequel il avait écrit, au crayon rouge: "Lettres intimes". Il en tira une correspondance sur papier mauve, assez volumineuse, la remit à Mme Meillery, et, par habitude d'homme soigneux, il dit:

— Si vous voulez vérifier...

Mme Meillery, qui avait pris, d'abord, le paquet sans regarder, jeta les yeux sur ces billets. Elle eut, soudain, un tressaillement.

Elle en ouvrit un, vivement, ne réprima pas un geste de colère, demeura un instant interdite, puis lut avec plus d'attention... Certes, ces lettres étaient toutes pleines d'amour, d'un amour librement exprimé, avec des tendresses singulières, des précisions de détails, des rappels d'heures enfiévrées, des attestations d'une tendresse qui ne demeurait guère dans les régions idéales... Mais, c'était une autre qu'elle qui les avait écrites.

Elle eut un cri de surprise indignée:

— Mais ce ne sont pas mes lettres!

Elle parcourut ces feuillets, d'où se dégageait encore un parfum. Anxieusement, elle chercha des dates, les trouva, et reconnut qu'elles étaient récentes, qu'elles correspondaient au temps même de sa liaison... Nul doute n'était possible!... Ce Cœur, qu'elle croyait avoir uniquement asservi, elle l'avait

partagé avec une autre!... Au ton de ces chaudes épîtres, il apparaissait avec évidence que Maurice eût gaillardement mené de front deux intrigues, et que celle-là qui se révélait avait eu, par son côté effrontément sensuel, ses préférences certaines...

— Il me trompait!... Il me trompait! dit-elle, les dents serrées, frémissante, avec une flamme mauvaise dans les yeux... Et moi qui me désespérais!... Et moi, qui le pleurais!...

Elle se précipita sur les papiers rangés par M. Fortier, les lui arracha des mains, et, tandis qu'il la contemplait avec effarement, les feuilleta désespérément, anéantissant en un instant le bel ordre qu'il y avait mis.

— Rien de moi! s'écria-t-elle... Mes

lettres!... Il de les avait même pas gardées!...

Le dépit de ses inutiles déclarations de tout à l'heure, la sensation du ridicule au-devant duquel elle avait couru, sa vanité blessée, après ce rôle d'héroïne de l'amour où elle s'était plu, dominaient chez elle tout reste d'affliction, maintenant... Rageusement, elle déchirait les lettres mauves, les lettres donnant la preuve de la trahison de Maurice, dont M. Fortier, ne sachant quelle contenance prendre devant ce déchaînement subit, stupéfait de ces extrémités féminines, ramassait au fur et à mesure les morceaux. Elle se tourna vers lui, avec une espèce de fureur:

— Votre frère, dit-elle, votre frère!... C'était un joli monsieur, que votre frère!...



REMEMBRANCE

By Frank Dempster Sherman

THE flower you gave reposes
Where Love's dear relics are;
It sleeps among the roses,
Shut in a crimson jar,
Whose lifted lid discloses
The dreamers red and white,
From whose sweet lips
The fragrance slips,
Recalling dead delight.

The love you gave in token
Of all the happy years,
Fond words by fond lips spoken,
Joy's kisses, sorrow's tears—
Alas! the heart is broken
That holds them, yet they lie
In slumber there,
Still sweet and fair,
And shall until I die!

ELIPH HEWLETT, ELUCIDATOR

By Ellis Parker Butler

THE shaded parlor of Miss Ann Williams's cottage in Flushing, Long Island, was warming up as it did every afternoon when the sun edged around to the west, and Miss Ann was about to go upstairs and take her regular afternoon nap when the door-bell rang.

Miss Ann drew aside one of the white holland shades the smallest fraction of an inch and peered out. She could just see the edge of the back of the man on her porch, but there was a crooked elbow on the edge and she could see tucked under the elbow, a black oilcloth package of suspiciously rectangular proportions. Miss Ann let the shade drop from her fingers and stood perfectly quiet.

"That's a book agent," she said to herself. "I don't want any books! If I stand quite still he will think I am out, and he will go away!"

She stood quite still, so did the man on the porch. Miss Ann moved softly to a chair and seated herself noiselessly on the extreme edge. She folded her hands and waited.

"It is *not* a lie to do this," she said to herself presently. "I do not have to open the door unless I choose. It is my door. When he rings he asks to have the door opened. If I do not answer I merely say I don't choose to open the door."

She waited several minutes longer. So did the man.

"When you sit here like a mouse," her conscience said, "you are lying to him. You were going up stairs. Why don't you go? You are afraid he will see you. When he rang the bell he

asked if you were in. When you kept silent you tried to say you were not in. Don't lie, Ann."

Miss Ann reluctantly arose from her chair and went to the front door. She opened it a very little. The man on the porch turned quickly and removed his hat.

"I don't want any books today, thank you," said Miss Ann [hastily.

"You thought I was a book agent, didn't you?" said the man good-naturedly. "I am not surprised, madam. This is a book I have under my arm. Your mistake was natural. I excuse it. May I come in?"

Miss Ann hesitated. The man seemed harmless enough. He was a small man with respectable reddish side-whiskers and a rather bald spot on his head over which the long hairs had been lovingly smoothed with a wet hairbrush. He looked gentle and inoffensive, and suggested Home Missions and Sunday-school Bible classes, and a big, oppressive wife. He noticed Miss Ann's hesitation.

"Quite right!" he said; "you want to know my name and business. My name is Eliph Hewlett. I am an Elucidator."

"Step into the parlor," said Miss Ann. She was vaguely conscious of an impression that the Elucidators were a new sect that had sprung up in Maine or Kansas—something like Seventh Day Adventists and something like the Jumpers. She was willing to be enlightened.

Mr. Hewlett laid the oilcloth-wrapped volume on the floor and carefully placed his hat on top of it.

"Did you ever stop to think," he

asked impressively, "that there is mystery all around us?"

Miss Ann had a glimmering that an Elucidator was some kind of spiritualist.

"Mystery," continued Eliph Hewlett, "that seeks elucidation! Mystery that calls for the clear light of reason to penetrate its darkness! Mystery! To lighten that darkness, madam, is my task. This book and its fellows are my guides. Therefore I have chosen to call myself the Elucidator." Eliph Hewlett smiled gently upon Miss Ann. Then he drew himself up straight and frowned.

"Who killed Deacon Toots?" he asked suddenly.

"Mercy me!" exclaimed Miss Ann. "How do I know? I'm sure I didn't do it! I never heard of Mr. Toots!"

"But suppose," said Eliph Hewlett, "that Deacon Toots was found dead—murdered! Suppose he had left you a million dollars in his will. Suppose by his death you would inherit that money. Suppose, innocent as you are, the knife with which he was killed was at this moment under that blue sofa-pillow on that sofa. Suppose your gloves, stained with blood, were hidden in that clock-case. Suppose that a policeman came at this moment and arrested you—what then?"

Miss Ann looked at the sofa-pillow and the clock-case nervously.

"I'd scream!" she ventured.

"Suppose," continued Eliph Hewlett kindly, "that a great detective gathered up clue after clue until he had enough to prove to any jury that you were guilty, and you were arrested and put in jail, and all your friends deserted you, and pointing to you, cried, 'She killed Deacon Toots!' What would you do?"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Ann, "what would I do? Tell me!"

"You would, if you had my address, send for me," said Eliph Hewlett. "If I could come I would come to you. I would elucidate the mystery. I would find the criminal, I would laugh at the great detective. I would set you free. That is my business! I am an Eluci-

dator! My charges," he added, "would be several thousand dollars. It would be dirt cheap at the price."

"I don't believe I need any elucidating today," said Miss Ann. "You might leave me your card, but I am afraid it is hardly worth while. It doesn't seem likely that anyone will ever think I killed anyone."

"Ah!" exclaimed Eliph Hewlett quickly. "Stop! The great error! Neither did I think I would ever be suspected. Do I look like a murderer?"

He looked as gentle as Mary's little lamb.

"No," said Miss Ann, "I must say you don't."

"And yet," said Eliph Hewlett, "once I wore chains! Once the greatest detectives of the greatest secret police in the world all declared that I was guilty of murder! No one thought me innocent! I was condemned to die!"

Miss Ann leaned forward breathlessly.

"How in the world did you ever get away?" she asked eagerly.

Eliph Hewlett bent over and pulled the oilcloth parcel from beneath his hat. He laid it gently, almost reverently across his knees. He laid his right hand upon it. "I owe my life to this," he said solemnly, "to this and its mates. In this I learned of the wiles of the wicked, of the pitfalls of circumstance, of the trap of false appearances. I escaped from my danger, and as I stepped forth a free man the Czar took me by the hand and said, 'Eliph Hewlett, I congratulate you! You are a wonderful elucidator.' I looked him full in the eye. 'Your Honor,' I said, 'do not praise me. I am loose again. Virtue is its own reward. But,' I said, 'if you must praise something, praise the Scotland Yard Edition of the 'World's Great Detective Tales.' Forty-two volumes," I said, 'bound in half-morocco, two dollars a volume, one dollar down and one dollar a month until paid.' The Czar put his hand on my shoulder. 'Eliph Hewlett,' he said, 'I don't know how much a dollar is in our

money, and I don't care. If that set of books saved your life you put me down for twenty sets for my palace. And for sixty-two sets for my sixty-two head secret police officers. And for a set apiece for my secretary of state, and war, and navy and all the rest of my secretaries. And I'll pay cash down right now if you'll tell me how many rubles it figgers up to."

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Miss Ann.

"Yes, ma'am!" said Eliph Hewlett, "you may well say so. But I said to the Czar, 'Your Honor, I can't do it! I am not agent for that set of books. A set was sent to me by the publishers to look over, and I read it through, and what I learned there saved my life; but, Your Honor, I am not agent for them. I can't take your order.' Well, ma'am!" said Eliph Hewlett, "the Czar put his other hand on my other shoulder when he heard that and he said, looking me straight in the eye, 'Eliph Hewlett,' he said, 'I guess I'm boss in this here Empire of Russia. What I say, goes! I command you by my sceptre and crown to sit down and write and take the agency for those forty-two volumes of the Scotland Yard Edition of the "World's Great Detective Tales" at two dollars a volume, one dollar down and one dollar a month until paid. And,' he said, 'when you write give the publisher my best regards, and when you get the agency for the set, you write down the order for the number of sets I said before and come to me and get the cash in full. Will you do it, or will you prefer to be sent to Siberia for life?'"

"At that," said Eliph Hewlett, "my spunk got up, and I was about to tell him that he couldn't boss an American citizen around that way, but when I looked in his face I saw he felt he was doing a good thing, and I felt he was, too!"

"'Czar,' I said, 'I wouldn't do it just because you dare me not to, but I feel like you do, that innocent people are likely to be suspected of crimes and murders any day of the week and con-

demned on circumstantial evidence and hung or beheaded or sent to jail for life, and I honestly believe it is my duty to spread the valuable pointers contained in that Scotland Yard Edition of the "World's Great Detective Tales" all over the world at two dollars a volume, one dollar down and a dollar a month until paid. So I'll do it.' Then the Czar shook my hand warmly and said, 'Do it! Go back to your own land, the free and equal United States of America, and start there, because,' he said, 'it is such an immense set of books, containing over twenty-five thousand pages, that it will take years to translate it into the Russian language, and you'd better begin in the U. S. A., where English is read by one and all, because most of my subjects can't read anything but Russian, and not much of that. Go back home,' he said, 'and carry on the good work, and while you are across the deep blue sea I'll set out to educate my serfs and moujiks to read so that when you come back one and all can read that great work, which should be in every household.' And so," said Eliph Hewlett, "me and the Czar shook hands and I come home and here I am."

Miss Ann looked at Eliph Hewlett with increased respect.

"I suppose," she said, "you learned to wear your whiskers that way when you were in Russia?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Eliph Hewlett; "before I went there I wore my face smooth."

"And what is the Czar like?" she asked.

"Very handsome man," he replied, "but not as handsome as the Grand Duke Vassili. The Grand Duke Vassili, before his decease, was a noble-looking creature. I never saw nobler whiskers on any man. I often said to the Czar, after I got out of jail, 'Your Honor, I like your pointed beard, but I think the late Grand Duke's whiskers were far more elegant.' 'Eliph Hewlett,' he would answer, 'I agree with you. But we all have to get along the best way we can. If I could have whiskers like the late Grand Duke I would, but

I am no such whisker-grower as he was! The Czar was especially fond of that Grand Duke, and that was why he was so hard on me when he thought I had killed him."

"Dear me!" cried Miss Ann, giving herself the luxury of a pleasant little shiver of terror, "how did they ever suspect you?"

"Madam," said Eliph Hewlett, "when you read the forty-two volumes of the Scotland Yard Edition of the 'World's Great Detective Tales' you will see that the first thing that is done by one and all when a crime is committed is to suspect somebody. That is rule number one. Rule number two is that the person suspected must be the innocentest person handy. Them two rules are never broken. I have read the hundred and sixteen tales in these forty-two magnificently bound volumes, and in every one of them the wrong person is suspected at the start. So, as I didn't look like a Nihilist and had nothing against the Grand Duke and was a sweet-tempered and conscientious book agent humbly book-agenting my way, I was naturally suspected. I hold no ill-feeling against the Chief of Police. He done the best he could. Circumstantial evidence was against me."

"You poor man!" murmured his hearer.

"Yes'm," said Eliph Hewlett, "and thank you. You will be shocked when I tell you that my good friend, Grand Duke Vassili, passed across the dark river to a better land by being blowed into ten million pieces by an explosion. Ten million pieces, more or less. There was very poor samples of the Grand Duke left for clues; he was numerous but small after that explosion. When I entered the room there was nothing left of his elegant whiskers but a smell like burned feathers."

Miss Ann leaned forward breathlessly. "Yes?" she said.

"At that time," said Eliph Hewlett, "I was taking a tower through Russia selling Grundy's New Universal Atlas, which had in it a map of Manchuria brought down to the latest minute.

That atlas was a good one. It was only five dollars—one dollar down and one dollar a month; and when I rang the Grand Duke's door-bell and he come to the door I saw he would buy. He had the high, wide brow and whiskers of an intellectual man, and I knew he would want that atlas. He did! He ordered ten copies, saying he looked for a war in the East, and if the war came as scheduled he would have to study the Manchurian map continuous and steady, and he would wear out atlases like a loose shoe wears out stocking heels. So he took ten, so as not to run short, there being no telling where I would be when the war broke out."

"Go on!" pleaded Miss Ann.

"Yes'm!" said Eliph Hewlett. "Ten days later I walked up to the Grand Duke's palace to deliver the books. I had the ten volumes tied up in a bundle. I rang the door-bell. The kitchen-maid opened the door. 'Go right up to the Grand Duke's boudoir,' she said. 'He expects you.' So I went up the front marble stairs and found myself in a long hall. There were sixteen doors off that hall and all closed. Which was the door of the Grand Duke's boudoir?"

"You can imagine, ma'am, that I did not want to walk into the Mrs. Grand Duke's bedroom by mistake. I stood and thought! I was all alone, and I was trying to decide which was the right door when the third door on the left-hand side exploded out into the hall, all busted into splinters, and a big cloud of smoke and small pieces of Grand Duke bust out after it; I knew what had happened—the Grand Duke had been assassinated.

"Madam," said Eliph Hewlett, "my first notion was to fly! There was a window handy, and I chucked them ten atlases out of it and had one leg out after them when the coachman and footman and six policemen grabbed the other leg. Not liking to drag them all out of the window, where they might have been hurt by the fall, I backed up and said simply but truly, 'I am not guilty! Let go of my pants!' Instead, they held me tighter.

"One of the policemen said, 'Send for the Chief of Police,' and in a minute he come. He looked over the premises and heard what the kitchen-maid had to say about my entering with a big bundle and going up to the Grand Duke's boudoir all alone. 'Ah, ha!' he said; 'so, ho! A Nihilist disguised as a book agent! Very clever. You enter the house with a package of dynamite. You go to the Grand Duke's boudoir. You chuck in the dynamite and run! The Grand Duke becomes the late Grand Duke! Oh, ho! Off to jail!'"

"In Russia," explained Eliph Hewlett, "they do things quick. In another minute I was dragged to prison and chained to the wall. The executioner came to cut my head off, but I held up my hand. 'Stop!' I cried, 'I am a United States citizen. Cut my head off at your peril. Send for His Honor the Czar!' They hesitated. At length they sent and the Czar came breathlessly in a cab, not even having stopped to put on his crown."

"As soon as His Honor the Czar stood before me, I spoke. 'Your Honor,' I said, 'I am guiltless. I ask only five minutes in the room where the assassination came off. If I cannot prove myself innocent, then, Your Honor, say the word and cut off my head. Five minutes, Your Honor,' I said, 'is more than enough for a man who has read the Scotland Yard Edition of the "World's Great Detective Tales!"' The Czar thought. 'So be it!' he said after a minute, and they led me to the Grand Duke's palace."

"When I entered the boudoir," said Eliph Hewlett, "all watched me with wonder. I jumped from place to place, touching this, smelling that, looking at the other thing, while the Czar kept his eye on his watch. In just one minute and two seconds I solved the mystery and stood before the Czar again. 'Your Honor,' I said calmly, 'I have discovered the assassin!'"

"The Czar was astonished. 'Marvelous!' he cried. 'You have broken the world's record in solving mysteries by six minutes and fifty-eight seconds!'"

Speak! Who is the guilty person and how did you guess it?"

Eliph Hewlett could almost hear the beating of Miss Ann's heart.

"Madam," he said, "I will tell you just what I told the Czar. 'Your Honor,' I said, 'the late Grand Duke committed unintentional suicide by blowing himself into small pieces with gunpowder. The guilty accomplice was a carpenter.' Unanimously the whole crowd shouted, 'Sawwoodovitch!'"

"What's that?" I asked.

"Sawwoodovitch," said the Czar trembling, 'is the boss Nihilist. He is a carpenter. How did you guess it?'"

"I pointed to a piece of door-casing on the floor. 'That,' I said, 'is painted and varnished. The varnish is still bright and clear. If it had been varnished long it would have become clouded and smoky, because the Grand Duke was a great smoker.' The Czar nodded. 'Right you are,' he said."

"Very well," I said, 'here is a small piece of the late Grand Duke. It is only a bit of skin from the end of his nose, but it is stained a blue color in small dots. Those blue dots mean gunpowder. Hence I know gunpowder and not dynamite was used. The underside of this piece of varnished door-casing is burned black. By smell and taste I know it is a gunpowder burn. Hence the explosion was inside the door-casing, and blew outward toward the late Grand Duke. Otherwise the varnished side of the door-casing would have been burned with powder. Consequently someone must have put the gunpowder inside the door-casing. No one could have done that but a carpenter. Did a carpenter do anything to this closet door lately?'"

"The Czar, his eyes as big as saucers, nodded. 'Yes,' he said, 'a carpenter put up a new door-casing two weeks ago; but how could the explosion have waited so long to explode?'"

"I pointed to a pipe that lay on the floor and to forty or fifty burnt matches that lay around. 'The late Grand Duke,' I said, 'was an impetuous man. He was a great pipe-smoker. When I

sold him the atlases he could hardly sit still long enough to look at my sample. But here is the proof. The match ends are at all parts of the room. From that I know that the late Grand Duke walked around and smoked and let his pipe go out and then struck matches wherever he happened to be. The walls show no match marks. Neither does the woodwork. A gentleman and a grand duke does not scratch matches on his pants. Where did he scratch them? See!

"I led the Czar to a window. On the window-frame there was a strip of beading, just as there had been on the closet door-casing. By looking very closely, we could see the marks of a match. It is a trick every smoker learns—that a match can be struck in the angle of a beading and leave no ugly scratch. 'The late Grand Duke,' I said, 'struck one match too many on the closet door-casing. It is simple! The carpenter saw that the late Grand Duke walked around and struck matches. He filled the door-casing with gunpowder and went away. He knew that some time the late Grand Duke would strike a match in the tiny crack he left in the beading of the door-casing. Today the late Grand Duke struck the match. He is in heaven!'"

Eliph Hewlett paused, and Miss Ann drew a long breath.

"And they did not cut off your head?" she asked.

"No," said Eliph Hewlett, "I have it still with me, due—I am proud to say—to the knowledge I gained by reading the Scotland Yard Edition of

the 'World's Great Detective Tales,' forty-two volumes, two dollars a volume, one dollar down and one dollar a month until paid. Terms so easy the money will not be missed. Many and many a time since then have I been suspected of crime, and, by glancing at one of these wonderful books, found hints that pointed me to the real criminal and set me free. No one, however lovely or innocent, is safe from detectives unless fortified by these marvelous works of genius, each tale of which is ten times more marvelous and thrilling than the story of the late Grand Duke Vassili. You, madam, may never be suspected of the murder of Deacon Toots. On the other hand, you may be suspected tomorrow. But suppose *you* are murdered? Suppose you are found dead in bed some day with no clue but those that point to your dearest friend. Would you have that friend suffer? Far better to invest the small sum of one dollar a month in a set of the Scotland Yard Edition of the 'World's Great Detective Tales' and learn from them the wonderful secrets of analysis, synthesis, clues and elucidation, so that you can, when that friend is about to be led to the murderer's cell, arise in your might and say, 'She is not guilty,' and point to the guilty man!"

Eliph Hewlett suddenly dropped the excited tone in which he had been speaking and said, in his business voice:

"They come in two bindings, red or blue. Which do you like best?"

Miss Ann hesitated just one moment.

"I'll take the blue," she said.



OMINOUS

COBWIGGER—Is his case really hopeless?

CODWELL—It looks that way. All his distant relatives have flocked to his bedside.

TWO AT THE PLAY

By John O'Keefe

SHE sat beside me in the row of A's,
And as I viewed her poise her dainty head—so—
I knew the ticket coupon told her praise.

("A 1": it read so.)

Naïve her joy to see the curtain's rise
Reveal a group of villagers lymphatic.
The play that evening was, you may surmise,
Melodramatic.

I think 'twas called "The Missing Prince." If not,
"The Banished King" proclaimed its purport vital,
Or else "The Persecuted Peer" was what
It had for title.

But what of names? The haunted house was there,
Constructed solely for the midnight killing,
And, as the villain's poniard flashed in air,
She gasped, "How thrilling!"

And 'mid the second act, in which the count
(Or baron, or some other from the peerage)
Kicked out his son, who hadn't the amount
Of fare by steerage,
She said, "How mean!" But when the banished heir,
Retaliating, pumped his sire of lead full,
I heard a groan from my companion's chair:
"Oh! ain't it dreadful!"

She trembled when the duke (who seemed to live
For purposes of intermittent slaughter)
Bowstrung his saintly wife and tried to viv-
Isect his daughter.
And then the mortgage! As the lawyer stiff
Cried, "Out ye go!" as harsh evictors say it,
She whispered, "Do they owe him much?"—as if
She'd gladly pay it.

The snowstorm came; the paper flakelets flew
About the outcast, pale as any lily;
And she her coat about her shoulders drew,
She felt so chilly.
I glowed with joy to think that 'neath the sun
One girl's emotions were not wholly sated.
I loved her for the fact that she was un-
Sophisticated.

THE SMART SET

The curtain fell upon the plotters foiled
 (I think the duke committed hari-kari)
 And on the youth and maiden, still unspoiled,
 About to marry.
 And as I led *her* to the outer light
 She raised her eyes, now rid of woes alarming,
 And said, "Oh, thanks for *such* a pleasant night!
 'Twas really *charming*!"

.

Heigho! that's twenty years ago, and plays
 Have changed from the old-fashioned drama *melo*.
 . . . What's that, my dear? You wish the olden days
 Still moved a fellow?
 Come, then! I should be working at my desk,
 But since you seek theatric melancholy
 We'll have it. Let me see: what's that burlesque
 Up at the Folly?



AN AVOWAL

By Felix Carmen

WHEN I first dared say, "I love you,"
 Blushing sweetly, she replied:
 "Swear it by the stars above you,
 Then I shall be satisfied."

So I kneeled down, and before it
 Was too late for growing wise,
I looked up to her and swore it
 By the only stars—her eyes.



WHAT WE MAY EXPECT

CUSTOMER—Do you expect any more novels in today?
SALESMAN—Here's our time-table, ma'am.

THE EMPTY GLASS

By Edna Kenton

CHENEY settled into his comfortable lounging-chair beside his library-table, and reached out a leisurely hand for his cigar-box. He selected thoughtfully from its already carefully chosen contents, and, after a few tentative whiffs, felt assured he had never made a better choice. He drew his reading-lamp nearer, and then further to one side, at a better angle for reading, and scanned the table thoughtfully. On it lay two heavy rolls of foreign periodicals, their paper wrappings torn alluringly apart, weeklies and dailies from London, Edinburgh, Paris and Berlin. Almost in front of him lay a box from the book-shop filled with new books sent up for examination. All the latest work of the busy presses of the world lay invitingly before him, to say nothing of the familiar presence of his own fine library, whose many volumes stood compactly on their brown oaken shelves.

Perhaps it was the sound of the autumn rain against the leaded window-panes which made Cheney turn from thought of leisurely reading to compelling thought of Mildred Craven. Had it not been for this miserable drizzle he would be with her now, with the question which had trembled on his lips for this year-long week asked and answered. He had intended to go to her tonight, and all day long, while he dictated letters and decided that Calkins was the man for China and that Stedman be recalled summarily from Japan, and while he formulated his ultimatum to the B. B. & O. of cold, incisive character, his brain had been filled with haunting memories of Mrs.

Craven's flower-run balcony hanging in front of the pulsing lake, where he and she had sat that night one week before, when revelation came to him that this was the woman who *must* make a home for him out of his splendid house, which had never had a mistress. And boyishly enough, despite his forty-odd years, when the evening fell, with its drip of rain and slow roll of thunder, he could not make himself content with the thought of a room, however dimly lighted, in Mrs. Craven's warm, scented, compact little apartment, in the place of that flower-run balcony. There it was that revelation had stricken him dumb and breathless; he wanted to tell her there, to take her there. For a week he had deliberated deliciously. Twenty-four hours more would be but twenty-four hours more, and by this time tomorrow night there was not one chance in a thousand that he would not be holding her in his arms—his! Never once had he feared what her answer was to be. If by chance she should say no at first, it would mean nothing to him but a little longer delay before he brought her home to this splendid residence, five years built, and never for a day thereof a real home.

He put out his strong hand and pushed the reading-lamp still further away from him, lowering slightly its strong light. As he listened to the rain beating monotonously against the panes and heard the faint song of the wind about the corners of the house he smiled a little and stretched himself luxuriously before the leaping fire. Beside him, on his smoking-stand, were whiskies and brandy. He poured out

a glass of brandy and watched it ripple oilily against the crystal. Its odor stung his nostrils as he held the glass in his firm fingers, and a far-away strain of a far-away song hummed through his brain, resolving itself at last into rhythmic words:

Let the toast pass; drink to the lass;
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

Then Cheney laughed boyishly at his own absurd foolery.

But the laugh faded. Somehow, with inconsiderate force, the thought of Dick Craven obtruded itself upon him, and he found himself wishing vehemently that the fellow had never been born, or, being born, that he were now dead and gone. The divorce had been decent enough, and Mildred Craven had always been thoroughly prudent and reserved in whatever she had to say about the man who, until three years ago, was her husband; but the jealous pity of it was that there was a man on earth alive who had had such claim to the woman Cheney loved. He knew Craven personally, if slightly; had known him some years before, when Mrs. Craven was to him unknown and when his social position made him eligible to know Dick Craven in a business sense merely, though they had been members of the same club.

Not that Gordon Cheney was in any way, in the popular sense of the obnoxious phrase, a self-made man. He had no illiteracy to overcome as his wealth grew; no family connections to hide as his circle of friends widened. In money equipment his family had been slightly below middle-class, but in mental ability and aspirations somewhat above it. He had never lifted a finger to push himself into what the occupants thereof were pleased to term the "higher circle." Yet for seven years his name and fame had grown steadily, until he was looked upon by the entire North Shore as a man who had "arrived" without loss of dignity and with something of the air of granting his presence. No man or woman had ever patronized Gordon Cheney, even in the days when he was getting his

grim foothold upon the ladder; and no man or woman now would ever be guilty of making such attempt. He had risen slowly, but with fateful certainty, and the rise had been so gradual that there were no leaps to cover, no eager bounds and strides to hide.

Yet these seven years, after all, had worked wonders. Despite his own innate dignity, and his inner assurances of real worth, not even five years before could he have dreamed of aspiring with any hope of success in his wooing to the hand of such a woman as Mildred Craven, American born indeed, but foreign bred—even to her charming pronunciation of her mother tongue—exotically cultured, microscopically guarded up to the time of her marriage to Dick Craven.

Cheney poked speculatively at the fire while he wondered anew over the hidden causes for the break in the Craven menage. The divorce had been granted privately, on grounds which might mean anything or nothing, according as one had much cause or no cause for the court's decree. But at all events—he shrugged his fine shoulders—it had been granted, and he knew that she had no regrets. She was too vitally alive to waste time ever in mere regrets over any past, while the present lay beneath her lovely hand, and the future stretched its alluring way before her sleepy, gleaming eyes.

And the magnificent woman she was! Cheney's eyes grew warm as her vivid image rose before him; tall, slender, graced with exquisite curves, and instinct throughout with vital life which showed seductively through her eyes of golden brown and her lips of wine-like crimson, and her slender, magnetic fingers, and her white, throbbing, alluring throat, and her foreign nurtured shoulders which of themselves all but spoke—

Cheney sat upright, his eyes shining warmly. He glanced quickly at his watch. What mattered the beating rain which must drive them from her flower-run balcony indoors, to a room warmed with leaping flames from the

hearts of inert logs of wood! What mattered place or light or dark; what mattered anything but season, and that season, now! But he sank back into his chair. It was a little after ten o'clock. If he were a mere boy, he might indeed go to her, even now. But being, what he had to remind himself sternly that he was, a man of forty-two well-lived years, he must wait, as he had serenely willed to do earlier in the evening. Yet he told himself with a grim smile, that nothing would matter the next evening, neither rain nor wind nor a premature blizzard, rushing down from the far Northwest.

He threw his cigar stub into the fire, and reached out a lazy hand for the waiting brandy, forgotten for an hour. Its rich, woody odor pierced his nostrils again as he raised it from the table. And as his fingers touched the glass, the old melody came to his mind again, with visions of laughing eyes, and the slip of merry feet, and the memory of joyous hours:

. . . drink to the lass;

Here's to the maiden of blushing fifteen,
And here's to the widow of fifty;

Here's to the maid with her bosom of snow;
Now to her that's as brown as a berry;
Here's to the wife . . .

Cheney set the undrained glass down hard, and leaned forward, staring uneasily into the fire. He had forgotten—the boy! He had remembered his dead wife, only to forget her in tardy remembrance of the boy. It seemed rather hard on John, considering the sort of boy he was. Considering the boy he was, he was entitled to practically first consideration. And until now, he, his father, had forgotten to consider him—with that burden of consideration, at least, which Constance had seen fit to lay upon him, for such a time as this.

Once remembered, he could not get the boy out of his mind, for the boy had been his father's life, ever since his birth, twelve years before. He never thought of his son biographically, so to speak, that he did not think with a relieved shudder of the ignorantly com-

posed way in which he had taken the thought of the child during those months before its birth. He had not been greatly moved one way or another. He had not been in any sense brutally unsympathetic, but he simply had not been able to realize things as Constance seemed to grasp them from her first knowledge of the child's coming. He had supposed that such difference in power of comprehension was the natural thing; a potent example of the vital differentiation of the sexes. It was natural for women to bear children; it was natural for men to expect them to be born; that was as far as his realization of things went, until that awful night came, through which Constance struggled blindly and alone. The moments when he most keenly realized her solitude were the few moments when he nerved himself to enter her room, and saw her lying helpless before relentless Nature. What mattered the human presence of doctors and nurses, even his own presence—his own presence least of all! During that night, toward gray dawn, she sent for her mother once, and for her brother; for him, her husband, not at all. What few times he had been with her had been moments when he had crept in, unbidden and undetected, because his angry remorse would not let him stay away entirely. As he had tramped the empty house below-stairs, waiting doggedly for the dreadful news of her death and the child's, he tried to comfort himself for her ignoring him by the paltry assurance that, after all, she had known of his earlier visits to her sick-room; but it was useless to attempt to cover over certain knowledge with that inadequate salve. The thing which made her illness so desperate was its prematurity; and none knew so well as he, save only Constance, what it was that had caused her illness to come so suddenly and desperately upon her. While he tramped sullenly through the small cramped rooms of the small, cramped home, which was theirs then, he had cursed bitterly the woman whose revengeful coming two days before had

brought home to Constance first-hand knowledge of the hidden side of his life. She had courageously tried to steady herself against the shock of revelation for the sake of her child, but as Cheney watched her that night, and listened aching to the smothered sounds from that room above, he had known that if she died, or if the child died, his was the shameful blame.

Tonight his eyes darkened ominously as he thought of that revengeful woman. Not for years had he thought of her as he was thinking of her tonight. He had punished her relentlessly for her breaking of the code of honor which governs with strictest law such paid relations. He had driven her from the city; where, he neither knew nor cared; and he thought tonight with pleasure that, if she still lived, she still feared him. But after all, what harm he had dealt her she had dealt out first to him, doubled and trebled. For Constance was incapable of seeing in his explanation anything purely commercial or anything of consideration for her; she was blind to anything whatever of what Cheney grimly called "the man's side," then or afterward. He affirmed over and over to her that in the real sense he was not faithless to her; that he loved no other woman on earth but her—and the immediate outcome of plea and protestation was that night of premature agony intensified one hundred times by her mental suffering, and, toward full morning, the birth of the puny, feeble, seven months' child—his boy! It was not until he bent over the child, three hours after its birth, in a brief moment when its special nurse had been imperatively summoned to aid the doctors and nurses fighting doggedly over Constance, that the full enormity of his indifference during these months came to him. He had never dreamed before, even dimly, what it meant of travail to bring a child into the world, and this one, brought at last to birth, might have been other than a son. In that moment he ached with longing to put

into imperishable words the gratitude he felt toward Constance and his infinite pity for her desperate woe; gratitude and pity which he could not even try to put into words, whose very fact she would regard as insult because of the gulf which had yawned so suddenly between them.

Cheney moved to cast another log upon the fire. He passed his hands over his face and shrank from their chill. He tried to pull himself together, to go back to thoughts of Mildred Craven, the woman he loved so passionately; the woman who, after seven years of loneliness, he was intending to ask to be his wife. But it was hopeless. The thought of her was no more warming than the thought of his dead wife, and not nearly so potent. He could see nothing but Constance's face as it had looked upon him from among its pillows the day she died.

She had lived until John was five years old. For the child had lived through a puny infancy, which, in the anxiety it brought them, did more to draw husband and wife together than any other thing. The time came at last, six months after his birth, when the division in their lives was healed, over a scar, indeed; but Constance was not a woman to open old sores. The reconciliation had come with a sort of spontaneity, beside what had seemed for one long night the baby's death-bed; but even at the time he had known, with a deeper insight into his wife's heart than was comfortable to have, that she was all but consumed with a slow, paralyzing fear of divorce and separation from her child. They had never talked of their trouble but once again, two months after the child's birth, in a moment which outwardly was calm and unemotional. But when she had spoken of the unendurable torment of living their lives together any longer, he, in his jealous fear of losing his child, had reminded her as gently as he could put his reminder into words, that she had no proofs to gain her divorce and the custody of the child, and that he

would fight the latter thing with every means within his power. Then he had suggested the possibility of peace and reconciliation, deferentially, humbly, with as much penitence as he could feel, though his penitence was really nothing but anger at the woman who had wrought such havoc in his home. He had only an average code of ethics, but he said what he could say sincerely, said perhaps a little more than he could say sincerely. And four months later, beside what had been all but a death-bed, after a night of common care and grief, and in the full flush of a common joy over their living child, in a moment before whose memory Constance Cheney never abased herself with sufficient humiliation, she yielded to his second plea and to fatalistic impulse, and for five years lived with him, his wife, with never another word regarding his unfaith, past or present. Of the latter thing she had no shred of proof, and yet he knew that she knew, with all the strength of her psychic powers. At first he marveled at the strength of will which sealed her lips, and at last he took the sacrifice of her life as a part of life, and gave her with all honesty the best there was of him. In that one stormy scene of theirs he had tried to show her that his unfaith, which he did not call unfaith, was for her as well as for him, and he had realized from that repulsed defense the utter futility of speech. After the first few months of reconciliation and restored outer harmony he took her yielding for what it seemed, with absolutely no conception of what it was, and lived with her five peaceful years. Up to the day of her death!

Cheney rose stumblingly from his chair. The day of her death was a frightful memory. For almost a year following it he had thought of nothing else, and since then he had drowned memories of it in many ways, in any ways, when they threatened to overwhelm him as now. But he knew that he was powerless to fight tonight against their marshaled strength, and he dropped back into his chair and

stared gloomily, heavily, at the leaping fire, unwarmed by its heat, shivering as the moaning wind rose to wailings about the house.

"But I want you to remember me in a peculiar way, Gordon," she had said to him that morning when he entered her room after the physicians had told him gently that the end was but a few short hours away, and after he, knowing that she knew, had tried to tell her he could never forget her and had felt the words crumble like ashes on his dry lips when she turned her head and looked at him with an enigmatic irony in her eyes and about her mouth.

There was a short silence between them before she broke it. If the moment had been literally their last one together, he could have said no other word just then. When she did speak it was on another theme.

"I suppose the doctors have told you what they told me—that it is only my lack of will that makes death a certain thing. I begged them not to tell you, because there is no use in it; but I saw they were going to, in the faint hope that you might rouse me to a sense of my duty, and make me try to live——"

"You are the only woman I have loved," he said stubbornly, with seeming irrelevance, immediately aware that with those words, repeated in the two former crises of their lives, he was bringing into his wife's death chamber ghosts of painted fancies, and yet strong in his consciousness of the absolute truth of what he said. "And there is John, Constance!" he broke out tensely. "There is John!"

"Yes," she assented quietly. "There is John." She lay still for a moment and then she turned her head again and surveyed him steadily.

"But not even for John can I call back any desire to live," she said gently. "They have said, all these medicine men you have brought to me, that is all I need to make me well—the desire to be well. But I am deadily tired. If there was any rest ahead, any relief, it might not seem so hopeless. But

the way stretches out, deadly long and gray, and I have broken under the strain of an inconsequent illness. Simply because I am so deadly tired."

She continued to look upon him, her face clear and serene, her eyes and lips still touched with irony.

"So John, much as he needs me now, much as he will need me later, must manage to do without me. But it is of John, of John alone that I want to talk to you in this last hour, and then, when I have ended, go quietly away and let me die as I have lived, alone. No, don't bring John to me again—last good-byes are dreadful things, and I have said them once—when I kissed him this morning and sent him away to spend his happy day, I kissed him good-bye then.

"When you came in here you said you would remember me always." The ironic light deepened in her eyes. "Yes, for I have given you your first-born son. Remember me because of him, Gordon; never as your wife, only as his mother. For I have been your wife, in the deep, essential sense, not at all. I have always lived apart from you, as you have lived apart from me. We have been united only in the gross, non-essential way. Women dream their dreams and too often wake to nightmares whose horrors do not fade, to martyrdoms of rack and flame—and in such cases they either slay their spirits or their spirits slay them. Thank God, my body is dying at last. For five years I have wakened every morning to shame, have lived with shame, walked with it—for John's sake, because I was his mother.

"You will marry again, Gordon; probably soon. We have lived through the first years of denials and hardships together, and you are just beginning to reap your harvest, and you will reap richly. I have never doubted that, and I have never grudged a single sacrifice on the altar of your high, legitimate ambitions. But you will want a woman to share these coming honors with you. God grant for her sake, if she loves you, that she may have of

spirituality not a trace, that she may be a magnificent, full-blooded, beautiful animal, to give you what you demand in women, and to whom you can give what she demands of life. But, Gordon, before you marry such a woman, think of John, think of John. Perhaps she may be motherly; think of him with her before you take her. But if she has ideals, a soul that hungers for understanding, keep your brutal hands from off her, Gordon Cheney. Because, until you are purified by draining to its bitter dregs the cup of renunciation and self-control and self-restraint, you are not fit to take such a woman and make her live the life I have lived with you."

She lay silent a moment, and then her weakened voice struggled on. "This is no cowardly wailing over the lot I drew in life, nor wholly a plea for women. It is to make you see, if anything can make you see it, the responsibility which rests on you in the training of your son. Until you drink of that cup, God help the child I am leaving! And because he is your son, because of that, don't be too stern, too pitiless. Be pitiful and tender with his lapses, whatever they are—make him not so selfish. Restitution? We cannot talk of that now. If you make him good to women you will have made restitution to me."

After seven years Cheney had not forgotten a word Constance spoke on that last morning of her life. Before noon she died, alone, as she had asked; quietly, as she had lived; and for weeks and weeks his remorse and shame and penitence and utter loneliness drove him well-nigh insane. And when the first violence of feeling had passed and left him deadened for the time being to suffering, he had been more than careful not to waken the sleeping dogs which seemed to lie just without his chamber door, all but ready to spring and rend him again. He had heard for once a soul, hovering between life and death, speak, and he had seen Truth, and had been well-nigh stricken unto death from shame. Tonight, for the first time in long years, he sat,

bowed again under the lashings of that dying spirit.

He rose at last, and after a few restless turns about the room he went out into the hall and softly up the stairs to his bedroom, and through it to the one adjoining, where John lay asleep—his only son and the pride of his proud heart.

He stood above the sleeping boy, gazing down upon his handsome face with bitter pain. In this last week, filled to the full with demanding passions, he had forgotten the claims of this child to just, first consideration. And he knew, without argument or valid protest, that so long as he regarded the child's welfare, he could not give him, for his second mother, Mildred Craven. How had Constance seen through the years to describe her so vividly—"a magnificent, full-blooded, beautiful animal!"

Yet he yearned with all his strength after the woman he loved, longed for her to live his happy, sensuous life with him, to scatter his splendid income with a hand which had never known what it meant to hold back from spending, to make this beautiful mansion home. One reason he had so delighted in her, one reason he so adored her, was because she had no illusions, no definite ideals, no trace of Puritanic conscience. He told himself, standing above the sleeping child, that he could not, even for the boy's good, give him for a mother another woman of ideals. One slain spirit was enough in all conscience to one man's credit. He was no deliberate brute, no monster who lay in his lair, in waiting for innocents to destroy them. And so, if Mildred Craven would but fleetingly consider this responsibility—

But there rose in his mind the memory of a delicate reference of hers spoken not so long ago, to schools for growing boys, French schools preferably; a reference, he was convinced tonight, which had been made with clear intent. He remembered now that the child had gone to Craven, Mildred's child, a girl. She had yielded her former husband their

child easily; there had been no contest. No, she would not tolerate this boy of his—and yet he loved her, loved her, loved her—

But imperceptibly his mind slipped back along the chain of years, past the day of Constance's death, and past that night of dreadful pain, past that day of revengeful betrayal, to those early days of marriage, his and hers.

How pure and precious she had been! And he, how unworthy—not in the stereotyped sense, the cant phrase—but really, how unclean! And yet her idealizing love for him had been mighty enough to reconcile most things and mightier to overlook the rest, until at last, after brave struggles, it died. And that love he had killed, not deliberately as a man may torture a rat, but clumsily, ignorantly, as a child may tear a moth's wings. After fourteen years, Cheney came at last, through pleasant paths, to an hour of full realization of the sins of his life, of the treasure he had cast away, of the spirit he had trod upon; and of atonement for his sins there was none.

Except as atonement lay in what he made of this boy, his handsome, only son. The boy's mother had said it. If the boy were made "good to women," it was all she asked. She had said pitiless things to the boy's father, in the last hope that through them he might be spurred, if spur there was keen enough to pierce his gross skin, to do his duty by his son. And the boy—he was twelve years old already—Cheney shrank in awe at the mighty task which lay already beneath his laggard hand, waiting only to be grasped. He had provided the child with the best of nurses, women, kindly and refined, as well as capable. He had indulged him, with some slight restraint, and had disciplined him more or less wisely. He had been companion and playmate to a great degree, considering his business cares and social engagements. He had never neglected his son. But the boy had always been to him an idolized plaything, a precious, animate possession, something wholly his own, to be

fondled and played with, to exult over, to indulge, nothing more.

For of actual parental responsibility he had felt nothing. The boy had been a living toy to him, nothing higher. He saw tonight that he had taken his son, as well as life itself, lightly, carelessly, good humoredly; that of actual responsibility for the welfare of any human being, he had felt nothing, ever. As far as actual welfare went, the boy might well be sent away to school; his instructors there, if they were well paid and kept strictly up to the mark, would see to it that he was trained well, morally, physically, perhaps spiritually—and the thought cut him like whips, for it meant that he himself meant nothing to his son, nothing.

Save only an Ideal. He knew his boy loved him, was filled with delight to be with him driving, riding, walking; aped him in many odd, laughable ways; and he had been amused and flattered, as men and women are always flattered when children earnestly take them for models. But he had been touched no more deeply, had been merely flattered and amused; had never seen before tonight what he meant to his son, what the father of any growing boy must mean to the child to whom he has given life. No, this boy could not be sent away from him, could not be parted in any way from him, could not be deprived of the one thing his father meant to him, an Ideal to grow up to. And he saw at last his place in his child's life, the link between the boy and his mother, the link which must not fail of strength, even

though he and his boy, like two seeking children, must climb together.

It was five o'clock when Cheney went down again to the library. The fire, neglected, had died upon the hearth, save for a few coals, grayed with ashes.

He went over to a window which had been standing open all the damp night through, and closed it. The touching of the cold panes made him shiver, and he came back again to the gray fireplace. As he passed his chair, he saw, on the table, the undrained glass of brandy still standing, and he reached for it eagerly and lifted it to his lips. The rollicking drinking song which had amused him in the early evening came to him again; but with it, and banishing it, came the memory of Constance's words:

"—the cup of renunciation and self-control and self-restraint—"

Cheney's head throbbed strangely. Even now, as in that last hour upstairs, beside the boy's bed, he felt that he was not alone in the empty room. And even as he thought it, the feeling vanished. But its solemnity remained.

After a few moments he went over again to the eastern window, and drew aside the curtains. The roll of the waters came to him, hidden though they were in the dull fog. Far in the east a faint light crept slowly up from the laboring waves, and Cheney watched it with grave eyes.

"Not to my wife," he said at last, "but to the boy's mother! Behold, far soul, the empty glass!"



SOCIETY'S ANSWER

HE—Shall we receive her?
SHE—Of course; she hasn't been found out.